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ROMAN EMPRESSES;

OR, THE

HISTORY OF THE LIVES AND SECRET INTRIGUES

OF THE WIVES OF THE

TWELVE CÆSARS

WITH HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL NOTES

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME II

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THE ROMAN EMPRESSES

SABINA,

WIFE OF HADRIAN.

Real happiness is not always to be met with in a high rank or exalted station, for frequently it happens that great vexations are attendant upon great fortunes, and kings upon their thrones are surrounded with cares, jealousies, and bitter anxiety. Sabina was not at all the more fortunate for being raised to the empire, but on the contrary fell a sacrifice to her grandeur. Hadrian became Emperor by her means, but that did not hinder him from being his wife's tyrant and persecutor: she found herself no better than a miserable slave in the most elevated dignity in the universe.

Sabina was daughter of Matidia, niece to Trajan, and grand-daughter to Marciana, that prince's sister, whose names were not so much as known (such was the obscurity of their husbands' fortunes) till Trajan obtained

the throne. Marciana and Matidia, her daughter, were widows when Nerva adopted Trajan, which certainly is the reason that history makes no mention of their husbands' names, who, in all probability, were not very considerable in the empire. But Trajan being invested with the sovereign power, his glory could not of course but reflect upon all his family, and from that time Marciana, his sister, Matidia, his niece, and the young princesses, Sabina, and Matidia, his niece's daughter, were always treated with the fitting respect due to their rank. The Senate, who were sure never to omit any opportunity of flattering and paying their court to the Emperor, gave them the most pompous titles, and among the rest that of August was not forgotten ; and as Trajan was exceedingly fond of his sister, and had also a great affection for his nieces, the Court, the city, and the provinces had the same regard for them that they had for the Empress herself.

Sabina was the eldest of Matidia's daughters, and because Trajan had no children, she was looked upon as his daughter ; so that whoever she married was thought to bid fairest for the empire, which was no small addition to her merit, and served mightily to heighten her good qualities. Besides these great prospects and expectations Sabina had this additional advantage, that few could

compare with her for beauty or virtue. In her countenance,[1] might be read that modesty and prudence for which she was so much distinguished; and she never encouraged any pleasures or diversions that were the least in the world inconsistent with the strictest decency. She had a sort of gravity in her looks that was the true picture of her mind, and which afterwards furnished Hadrian with a pretence to dislike her, and give out that he could not endure her gloomy and melancholy temper, as he called it; [2]but the complaints of some husbands are much to be suspected, and one ought to be very cautious how they give credit to any man when he is speaking ill of a wife he hates.

Of all those who paid their addresses to Sabina, and who aspired to the honour of marrying her, Hadrian was, without dispute, the most remarkable; for besides the advantage he had of being related to Trajan, and of having had him for his guardian, he possessed many excellent qualities, which were the more conspicuous, as he had the secret of concealing perfectly well all those vices that might have eclipsed them. He was tall, very handsome, had a comely figure, and hair that curled naturally, and

[1] Tristan Comm. Hist.

[2] Spartian. Hadrian.

a thick beard, which he took care not to have shaved,[1] because it hid some defect in his chin. He had so strong and robust a constitution that he generally travelled on foot and very seldom had any sort of covering upon his head even in the depth of winter, a most extensive genius, and so good an understanding that he was capable of penetrating the most abstruse sciences, and, in fact, there never was an Emperor that was master of so much knowledge as he. His memory was prodigious; he was thoroughly acquainted with all the roads he had ever travelled, and all the rivers he had met with in his journeys, and could call every soldier in his army by his name. He had so extraordinary a wit and vivacity, and so happy a facility at composing, either in verse or prose, that in the first he could speak extempore, and that as correctly as if he had had leisure to prepare his discourse. But this prince had also great faults: he was a great dissembler, cruel, cunning, debauched, vain, envious, and very jealous of other people's good fortune; he had an unbounded ambition,[2] and not content with being superior to other men in rank and power, he also pretended to be infinitely above the rest of the world in wit, learning and

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[1] Spon. recher. curieu. d Ant. Spartian.

[2] Dio. lib. 69.

abilities, not being able to endure those who were thought to excel him, whom he persecuted as much as possible, as it happened to Apollodorus,[1] and would have happened

[1] Apollodorus, a native of Damascus, was the great architect whom Trajan employed in the construction of the famous bridge that he made over the Danube, and several other magnificent buildings. Hadrian was present one day at a conversation that Trajan had with Apollodorus about an edifice he intended to erect; and as Hadrian prided himself upon his skill in every art, he must needs give his opinion upon this occasion, which was opposed to that of the architect. Apollodorus finding himself contradicted in a science which he, very justly, imagined he knew more of than Hadrian, answered him, with an air of contempt, "Go and divert yourself with your painting, for the matter we are now treating of is far enough beyond your reach." Hadrian, who did then pass a good deal of his time in that amusement, was so stung with this piece of raillery that he could never forgive it, for as soon as he was Emperor he wanted only a pretence to be revenged upon him. In fact, he banished him from Rome, but a little while after he carried his resentment still further, and Apollodorus furnished him with an opportunity to do so; for Hadrian having built a temple in honour of Venus, he sent the model to Apollodorus, as if it were to know his opinion of it, but in reality to let him see that he could do without him, and that fine buildings might be executed without his help. Apollodorus, having examined it, found several faults, and not being as cautious of offending the Emperor as in prudence he ought to have been, observed that the statue of Venus which was placed in the temple, and which was represented in a sitting posture, was too high in proportion to the building; for, added he, joking, when the goddess has a mind to rise and go out of the temple, she will not be able, except she stoops. Hadrian, who thought he had done the finest thing in the world, was extremely mortified when he himself perceived the error he had been guilty of, and for which there was no remedy but pulling down the roof of the temple, which was not elevated enough; he was, however, so exasperated at Apollodorus, that on a frivolous pretence he put him to death.

to Favorinus, if that sophist had not been wise enough to give him the honour of the victory in a dispute they had about a word. The philosopher had it in his power to have proved and maintained his assertion beyond all doubt, and being asked by his friends why he gave up the point so easily, answered; " Do you imagine me such a fool as not to acknowledge a person, who has thirty legions at his command, to be the most knowing man in the world ? " So dangerous was it to contend with Hadrian in any branch of learning.

Hadrian, with all his good qualities and skill in concealing his vices, was never able to secure the esteem of Trajan ; whether it was that that Emperor had a natural aversion to him, or whether he perceived a great many faults in him in spite of his art, or lastly, whether those courtiers, who were in favour, took pains to prejudice the Emperor against him. It is certain that Severianus, who was married to Paulina, and in whom Trajan put entire confidence, was the first that gave the Emperor information that Hadrian had dissipated his fortune ; and that prince (generous and munificent as he was) could not endure those unnecessary expenses, which foolish prodigality incurs from want of judgment, and sharply reprimanded Hadrian for it. Be it as it may, Trajan never approved of the match between Sabina and Hadrian, whatever

pains the latter took to bring it about. Nothing is more manifest than that Hadrian did not care for his wife Sabina, and that all his pretended esteem and affection for that princess was only the effect of his policy; so that it was Plotina who received the sincere tokens of his love, whilst he could afford Sabina nothing but cold and forced civility, even before Trajan's death. Sabina possessed no qualities that were agreeable to her husband, except her high rank and her portion—that is to say, the empire; these flattered his ambition, but never captivated his heart. Hadrian was, however, too cunning not to disguise his real sentiments, and to conceal his dislike with the contrary appearance, but this artifice would never have deceived Trajan, if the officious endeavours of Sura (in whom the Emperor placed all his confidence), added to the warm persuasions of Plotina, had not, in a manner, forced his inclinations, and broken through all obstacles to promote this marriage, to which Trajan did not consent but with the utmost regret. This sufficiently appeared [1] from the slender regard the Emperor had for Hadrian, though it might be said that he was become his son-in-law by his marriage with Sabina, and consequently that he never intended him for his successor. His being

[1] Dio. lib. 69.

raised to the throne then was entirely the work of the Empress, which she accomplished by the stratagem we have already taken notice of, and in which she was assisted by Attianus, who had been Hadrian's guardian, and the senator Similis, who was then in great esteem at Rome. This person did Hadrian great service upon that occasion, for which he was but very ill rewarded.

Hadrian was at Antioch when the news was brought him of the Emperor's death. He caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor immediately, without waiting for the determination of the Senate, under pretence that the State could no longer remain without a head; and this was the reason he alleged in his letter to the Senate, when he desired they would confirm the election. He solemnly protested, with horrible imprecations, that he would never put any senator to death, let his crime be what it would, which promise he was so far from performing that he broke it frequently; for, as he was very inconstant in his friendships, he persecuted all those whom he had loved, and to whom he was under the greatest obligations. This odd and unaccountable conduct soon after induced Similis, an officer of great honour and merit, to retire into the country, where, far from tumults, business and courts, he passed seven years in calm and quiet solitude, and reckoned that his whole life till then went

for nothing, of which he had a mind to inform all the world by ordering this epitaph to be written upon his tomb:

Hic jacet Similis,
Cujus ætas multorum annorum fuit,
Ipse septem dumtaxat annos vixit.

"Here lies Similis, who was in the world many years, but only lived seven."

He died in the 76th year of his age.

As soon as the new Emperor had settled and regulated matters in the East, he set out for Rome, where he did not question but his presence was necessary. He was received with great demonstrations of joy. The Senate decreed him the triumph that had been prepared for Trajan, and gave him the title of Father of his country. Sabina was also declared August; and the Senate, being desirous to show some particular mark of their esteem for the Empress, as niece to Trajan, honoured her with a new title, and called her a second Ceres. The Emperor celebrated his entry into Rome [1] by games and sports, and a very magnificent show which he exhibited on his birthday; he distributed a great deal of money among the people and soldiers, and endeavoured by his bounty, and all possible means, to acquire the goodwill and

[1] Faber, c. 8.

esteem of everybody; but at the same time he behaved so ill towards the Empress his wife that it was plain he had never loved her. In fact, as his sole reason for marrying her was to obtain the throne, which he had long sighed after, as soon as he was in possession of it and Sabina had nothing more to give him, he made her little better than his vassal. This is too frequently the consequence of those marriages which are founded upon motives of interest or policy; for as nothing is sought after but riches or grandeur, the parties are quite indifferent to each other, so that nothing remains but grief and remorse for having so dearly bought those chains that they are neither able to break nor support. Sabina cruelly experienced the truth of this, for Hadrian, who during Trajan's life had appeared so fond of her, was no sooner seated on his throne than, weary of dissembling, and far from setting any value on her, either on account of her person, or for her having procured him the empire, he, on the contrary, showed her the utmost contempt, and treated her in so insulting and brutal a manner that she was infinitely more a slave than an Empress. Such unjust and blamable conduct as this could not certainly be justified; [1] but Hadrian endeavoured to excuse

[1] Aurel. Victor.

himself by alleging something odd and disagreeable in the Empress's temper, [1]and gave out that her humour was insupportable, the ordinary pretence of bad husbands. But Sabina was not silent in regard to Hadrian's behaviour, when she found herself so cruelly dealt with; she was too sensible of this usage to bear it without complaining. One day, having been worse treated than ordinarily, she reproached him with his ingratitude and ill-nature, which, she said, was unbecoming in a prince.

Nor did she think herself obliged to keep it secret; on the contrary, she was in hopes that its being known could not but cover him with confusion, which might have a better effect than all her remonstrances and expostulations. So she made no scruple to lament openly her hard lot in being thus tied to a man of so intractable a disposition and so evil a mind.[2] But Sabina gained nothing by publishing her misfortunes, but, far from it, she ruined her position more than ever, for Hadrian, who by his supreme dignity was out of everybody's reach, and little valued what people thought or said of his conduct, made no alteration for the better in his manner of acting, but rather otherwise; for he proceeded to such a pitch of

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[1] Spartian.

[2] Aurel. Vict. in Hadrian.

brutality as to put her upon the footing of a maid-servant and talked of divorcing her, but certain reasons of policy hindered him from going that length. He kept, however, no sort of restraint with her, but showed her the utmost contempt, and that in so shameful a manner as has branded his name with eternal infamy, for, not content with settling his affections elsewhere, and dishonouring, by his inordinate appetites, the most illustrious families, even those of his intimate friends, [1] he became desperately in love with a young man named Antinous, a Bithynian, whom he abused by a horrible brutality, and carried his scandalous and detestable weakness for that infamous object of his passion to an excess that is almost incredible. This, it may be imagined, could not but provoke Sabina in the highest degree ; [2] she looked upon Hadrian as a monster she ought to avoid more than a wild beast, and her aversion to him became so great that she did all that was possible to prevent herself having a son by him, for fear that an heir sprung from him might inherit his vices and be the ruin of mankind, and she was not ashamed to boast of this.

The whole empire was a witness to this division

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[1] Spartian.

Tristan. Comm. Hist.

between the Emperor and Sabina, who, notwithstanding her hatred of Hadrian, accompanied him on all his journeys during his whole reign. His curiosity [1] induced him to visit all the provinces of the empire, notwithstanding the bad weather and the inclemency of the worst climates, with which the poet Florus reproached him in some humorous verses, in which he tells him that, if being Emperor would oblige him to travel through Britain and suffer the excessive cold of Scythia, he would not accept it upon those conditions. Hadrian, who was always very ready at repartee, answered him in such a manner that the poet did not come off best in it, for he composed some extempore verses in the same metre as those of Florus, in which he says that he would not for the world be Florus, who was always haunting taverns and scandalous places, and that it was more honourable for an Emperor to travel than it would be to act as Florus did, and to be over-run with vermin. It is to be observed that among the Romans a man would be extremely ashamed to have been found in a tavern. We have not thought it amiss to insert here the poet's verses and the Emperor's answer.

Ego nolo Cæsar esse,
Ambulare per Britannos,
Scythicas pati pruinas.

[1] Spartian.

The Emperor answered by these verses :—

Ego nolo Florus esse,
Ambulare per tabernas,
Latitare per popinas,
Culices pati rotundos.

The subject's good or bad fortune depends in a great measure upon the very looks of the prince: when he condescends to smile upon anyone, that person will be sure to meet with respect from everybody; and on the contrary, the unfortunate man upon whom he frowns is shunned and avoided by all the world, as if he carried infection about him; the inclinations of mankind will ever be of a piece with those of the sovereign.

Sabina, whilst Trajan was alive, saw all the grandees of Rome at her feet, and particularly Hadrian, who paid his court to her with the greatest respect and assiduity; but, no sooner was he invested with absolute power, and had begun to show his hatred of the Empress, than she was not only abandoned by those who had in a manner adored her before, but even treated most insultingly, by such as were permitted, if not ordered, so to do. From that time they lost all sort of respect for her, nor was there anybody who had not impudence and assurance enough to affront her, by everything they could invent that could cause her trouble and vexation. Among those who carried this liberty to the greatest lengths,

Suetonius, secretary to Hadrian, and Septicius Clarus, distinguished themselves in so brutal a manner that the Emperor (desirous as he was to have her mortified and ill-treated upon every occasion), could not hear of it with patience; he deprived them of his confidence and friendship, dismissed Suetonius from his employment, and gave it to Heliodorus, whom he then loved as much as he hated him afterwards. It is true that Hadrian could not endure Sabina: [1] he used her barbarously, and even obliged a great many of his courtiers to do the same; but it was the highest disrespect to him for anybody to insult the Empress without his permission. I know that some have attributed the disgrace that befel Suetonius to his having expressed too much compassion for that unfortunate princess, but I see no authority for that conjecture.

Hadrian was in Britain when Suetonius, his secretary, forfeited his good graces; and there it was that he was informed of Plotina's death. By the immoderate grief which he showed upon that occasion, it was evident that the passion he entertained for her was rather love than anything else. Sabina's condition was not, however, the

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[1] Spartian.

more tolerable upon that account, nor did he think himself obliged to give her a greater share of his esteem for having lost Plotina: she was still the object of his hatred and persecutions, and Antinous that of his affection; but the untimely end of that infamous wretch, which happened not long after, was a fresh subject of grief for the Emperor. It is credibly reported that while Hadrian was walking one day upon the banks of the Nile with his favourite, the latter fell into the river, and was drowned, except we rather choose to believe what an historian [1] has asserted, that the Emperor offered him up in an execrable sacrifice that he made to prolong his own life, which (as the magic which he had long practised informed him) would be the case, provided he could meet with a man who should voluntarily consent to be put to death for that purpose, but which nobody could be prevailed upon to do but Antinous. Be that as it may, Hadrian, on the death of that abominable favourite, committed incredible follies and extravagances. He wept like a child, and to mitigate his sorrow, or else to show his gratitude to Antinous, he erected temples and set up statues in honour of him, and placed among the gods the disgrace of mankind.

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[1] Dio. lib. 69.

Hadrian's perpetual journeys did not a little contribute to dissipate his affliction, but his custom of going bare-headed (let the cold be never so intense) and his other fatigues, so damaged his constitution, that he contracted dangerous disorders. He was pretty far advanced in years, which, added to the slight hopes he had of being cured and the contempt he began to perceive that people had for him on account of his age, made him think it high time to look about for a successor. At first he determined upon Severianus, his brother-in-law; but afterwards changing his mind, he was more inclined to Fuscus Salinator, his grand-son, than to Nepos his intimate friend. Gentianus, and many others in their turn, were also in his thoughts, but they all became odious to him, as if his intention to give them the Empire had rendered them guilty of having designed to rob him of it. At last, contrary to everybody's opinion, he[1] pitched upon Lucius Aurelius Verus, whom he adopted, and declared him Cæsar, though he knew by his magic art (as it is pretended) that he would not survive him, and consequently could never be Emperor. In fact, Verus died on his return from Pannonia, and the very day upon which he was to have delivered a panegyric, that he had composed in honour of his benefactor.

[1] Spartian. Dio. Xiphilin.

This threw Hadrian into new perplexities about the choice of a successor; but after deliberating a while he fixed upon Titus Antoninus, whom he adopted upon condition that he should adopt Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus, son of him who had died lately. Hadrian had been always extremely fond of Lucius Verus's father (too much for both their reputations), for malicious people attributed his resolving to make him his successor to very shameful motives.

Hadrian having thus settled the succession did great honour to his judgment, and was much approved of by all the world, but he mightily tarnished what good qualities he had by his cruelty, especially in the last year of his life. Severianus, his brother-in-law, and Fuscus, were the first that were sacrificed to his rage, under pretence of their having aspired to the throne. Catilius Severus, Intendant of Rome, was disgraced, being also accused of having designed to usurp the Empire, so that he lost the dignity he possessed by endeavouring to exalt himself to the sovereignty. But the most illustrious of these victims, as well as the most unfortunate, was the Empress Sabina, whom this cruel Emperor put to death, just when she had conceived expectations of a better fate from her husband's illness. Hadrian, after having persecuted her unmercifully, was resolved she should not have the satisfaction of

out-living him, and of thereby being compensated for all her sufferings; he treated her with such extraordinary rigour and severity that he constrained her to put an end to her own life, or, rather, he poisoned her, as it was generally believed. Thus perished this poor unhappy princess by the barbarity of him whom she had raised to the empire. After her death he was pleased to procure her immortality, and find her a place among the divinities, as if this impiety could make her happy in another world whom he had rendered so completely miserable in this. The senators did not scruple to grant those impious and ridiculous honours to her whom many of them had deprived of that which was justly due to her upon earth.

Hadrian's death took place soon after that of Sabina. His indisposition increased daily, and instead of deriving any benefit from the physicians, he complained that they had killed him. He caused himself to be carried to Baiæ, in the Campagna of Rome, to try what the change of air would do for him; but, far from observing the diet the doctors had prescribed him, he ate everything that aggravated his complaint, and thereby hastened his end. He saw its approach with great anxiety as to his future state, and composed some verses upon that subject which have made his last moments remarkable. He died at Baiæ, in the arms of Titus Antoninus, whom he had sent for, and his body was burnt in Cicero's house at Puteoli.

FAUSTINA THE MOTHER,

WIFE OF ANTONINUS PIUS.

The name of Faustina is as remarkable in history as that of Messalina, and for much the same reason. In the Empresses who were known by these two names, the same inclinations, vices, and debaucheries were predominant; for it does not appear that the wife of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus had any right to reproach the wife of Claudius, nor can it be said that Faustina (the mother) was at all more virtuous than Messalina, whom Nero married after he had killed Poppæa.

Annia Galeria Faustina was daughter of Annius Verus, and sister of Ælius Verus, whom the Emperor Hadrian declared Cæsar, and who died soon after he had received that honour. She was of a very ancient family, and her ancestors, who came originally from Faventia, had filled the most important posts in Rome with great honour and reputation; but neither her noble extraction, nor the favour her brother was in with Hadrian (who certainly loved him more than was consistent with decency), contributed so much to her advancement as her beauty. The

medals of her that still exist represent her as a most amiable person. She had a peculiar sweetness in her countenance, a gay and lively disposition, a very insinuating manner, an amorous temperament, and was extremely fond of pleasures and diversions, which unhappy tendency was the occasion of all those horrible irregularities to which she abandoned herself.

Her mother's name was Rupilia Faustina, daughter of Rupilius Bonus, who had been consul, but came of an obscure family. Some affirm[1] that he never was really consul, but that he was only honoured with the consular insignia, for his name is not in the list of consuls. It is very probable that she was indebted to her beauty for her distinguished marriage with Annius Verus, [2]who on his father's side was descended from Numa Pompilius, second King of Rome, and on the other from a King of the Salentines. Be that as it may, Faustina, of whom we are now treating, was the offspring of this marriage.

If Verus and his wife took much pains to give their daughter good ideas of virtue, it must be confessed that they laboured upon a very ungrateful soil, and that her shameless and most scandalous behaviour is to be

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[1] Casaubon. not. in Capitol.

[2] Eutrop.

attributed entirely to the depravity of her nature, in which she resembled her brother Ælius Verus, whose licentious and debauched life caused his wife Fadilla so much trouble and vexation, and which she might have spared herself, as it was far from having any good effect upon him.

Faustina, besides her illustrious extraction and her extraordinary beauty, was the most agreeable person in the world; she was of a cheerful and lively disposition, full of wit and vivacity, but there was something in all her conduct that was not at all[1] consistent with the modesty of her sex, especially at parties of pleasure. On such occasions she did not pride herself upon an over-strict observance of the rules of decency, which were always very irksome to her, but, on the contrary, made no scruple of giving full vent to her natural temper, being quite unguarded both as to her words and actions, in which she discovered the strongest inclination to libertinism. Her friends were willing to hope that her indiscreet behaviour proceeded rather from her giddy unthinking youth than from a natural bent that way, and that when she was married she would grow more sedate and reserved, but it was not in the power of anything to

[1] Capitolin.

make an alteration in her for the better, her bad habits becoming every day more ungovernable, so that in a little time she threw off all kind of restraint.

Faustina's temper and genius induced her parents to marry her betimes, and certainly they could not have found a husband more worthy of her than Titus Antoninus, who possessed the highest qualifications. He was originally from Nîmes in Languedoc. His family remained for some time in obscurity, but Titus Aurelius, having been made twice consul, owing to his extraordinary merit, after passing through all grades of office, it became very illustrious. His son Aurelius Fulvius, who was also honoured with the consulship, was remarkable for his honesty and integrity. This person had, by his wife, Arria Fadilla, Titus Aurelius Antoninus, known since his exaltation to the empire by the name of Antoninus, and who was one of the greatest princes that ever sat upon the throne. He had received from nature and education all the advantages and virtues that were to be wished for in a great monarch. He was[1] tall and well proportioned, had a most amiable countenance, and such sweetness and majesty in his face, as gained him the esteem and affection of everybody. It was even observed that he

[1] Capitolin. Spon.

greatly resembled Numa Pompilius, whose virtues and good qualities were revived in him. He was liberal[1] without prodigality, magnificent without ostentation, polite without affectation, easy and agreeable in his manner, cheerful in his conversation, exempt from ambition in his private life, and from pride and haughtiness, when holding the most honourable offices. He was exceedingly esteemed for his probity, learning, and eloquence, and loved for his moderation, goodness, and sweetness of temper. All these virtues made his reign glorious, and acquired him the surname of Pius, which does more honour to his memory than all those pompous titles, which were so liberally bestowed upon the other Emperors, and which were due rather to vanity and flattery than to truth and real merit.

These rare and excellent qualities soon distinguished Antonius, and procured him the highest offices; those of quæstor and prætor he filled with great honour and magnificence, and acquitted himself with so much wisdom and capacity in everything he undertook, that he was thought worthy of the consulship, which accordingly was bestowed upon him. His colleague in that exalted dignity was Catillius Severus, a very ambitious man,

[1] Eutrop. Aurel. Vict.

whom Hadrian would have made Emperor, if he had not discovered that he too earnestly wished for it.

It was during his exercise of this important office that he married Faustina, and this match was the source of all his misfortunes, as it attached him to a person whose character was directly contrary to his own. For she, who was in the flower of her age, delighted in nothing but pleasure and amusement; whereas Antoninus, having reached years of maturity, was grave and thoughtful, which was not at all agreeable to a young person of great vivacity, who could relish nothing but mirth and laughter.

It is very difficult for a wife of this sort to behave with that care and circumspection which virtue and decency require; for conjugal fidelity is seldom strictly observed when it has to contend with an impetuosity of constitution, especially when opportunities and temptations are sought after instead of being avoided; and it is much to be feared that a woman who is so excessively fond of amusements will not always insist upon their being perfectly innocent. Faustina, who was born with strong and violent passions, looked upon the gravity and reserve required of married persons as an intolerable constraint. All Antoninus's merits were not strong enough to defend her against the attacks of those crowds of admirers who

surrounded her, and who, by their poisonous maxims and seductive flattery, encouraged her in those vicious propensities to which she was naturally but too much inclined.

For some time after her marriage she lived in her ordinary manner, but soon after, she began to indulge her disposition for gallantry, and so by degrees shook off the very appearance of modesty and virtue, till she was irretrievably plunged into vice, and her debaucheries became the common topic of raillery and ridicule.

It is certain that Antoninus was informed of his wife's behaviour, which was publicly talked of, for she was so little solicitous about her reputation that she did not endeavour to conceal her crimes. But even if the Emperor had had so little penetration as not to discover it, it cannot be supposed that his friends should be so little zealous for his interests as not to let him know that his wife was the laughing-stock of all Rome. However, he did not proceed to violent measures, for, though he was thoroughly instructed in Faustina's shameful conduct, and was extremely disturbed about it, he chose to dissemble his vexation and remain quite silent about the affair.

Debauchery is always inexcusable, but was the more so in Faustina, upon whom it was, on many accounts, incumbent to have been more than ordinarily careful of

her conduct. Her husband was very faithful to her, and was worthy of all her affection; and besides, her marriage with Antoninus was no reason for her exempting herself entirely from the authority of her parents, whose esteem she ought by all means to have preserved. She had also children to whom she should have shown a good example, and whose education was of the utmost importance, but her appetites got the better of her reason, so that she followed her own inclinations rather than the good advice that was given her, and dreaded neither the resentment of her husband (who she knew was incapable of revenge), nor the indignation of her parents, whose remonstrances she despised. So, instead of giving her children good instruction, she encouraged them to tread in her steps, and we shall see in the sequel that Faustina, the only daughter she had left, being influenced by so scandalous and pernicious an example, became a monster of impurity.

Whether Galerius Antonius and his brother (sons of Faustina) died before or after their father came to the throne is what the learned differ about, for history does not decide; but we are informed that the eldest of the daughters, whose name is not mentioned, and who was married to Lamia Silanus, died before Antoninus went into Asia, whither the Emperor sent him as pro-consul.

Faustina accompanied him thither. She would have been heartily glad to have dispensed with that journey, which deprived her of all the pleasures of Rome, where her beauty and the delight she took in being admired procured her so many adorers; but as there was no help for it she was forced to submit. She went then with her husband to the East, where he had some presages of his future grandeur, and had daily opportunities of demonstrating such a sweetness of temper and such moderation as nothing could disturb, for it was proof against all provocations, of which he gave a signal instance on his first entrance into his province.

This illustrious pro-consul, on his arrival at Smyrna, took up his lodging for that night in the house of the sophist, Polemo,[1] because it happened to be at that time empty, the owner being absent; but the very night that Antoninus arrived there Polemo came home. He was a man very full of conceit, and so insupportably vain and

[1] Care must be taken not to confound this Polemo with other philosophers of that name. The person of whom we are speaking was a native of Laodicea. He was a man of great distinction in Smyrna, and had formerly been sent on a deputation by the inhabitants to the Emperor Hadrian, who received him very honourably at Rome, and showed him considerable marks of his esteem, which had rendered this philosopher so proud and insolent that he thought himself above all the world.

haughty that he imagined himself equal to the gods. The great influence he had with the Emperor, who was fond of that sort of people, flattered his pride so much, and made him so insolent, that he kept no restraint with anybody, as sufficiently appeared upon this occasion. This sophist, finding his house [1] occupied by the pro-consul, fell into such a rage that he made the street echo again, and after having railed at Antoninus in the most brutal manner, he sent him word to go out of his house instantly and procure himself a lodging elsewhere, without considering that common prudence, as well as good manners, required that the pro-consul (whom it was very dangerous to provoke) ought to be treated with more politeness: that it was in the highest degree unbecoming and indecent to oblige the wife of a pro-consul of Asia (extremely fatigued with a long journey) to rise out of bed at so unreasonable an hour and wander about in the dark to look for a lodging, and that he ought at least to have waited till the next morning.

A less mild governor than Antoninus would have punished the incivility of Polemo, and so brutal an affront would have induced any other in his place to have kept possession of the house he had selected for his

[1] Philostrat. vit. Polem.

quarters, in spite of its impolite owner, which he might have done by the assertion of his authority; but Antoninus, who was all goodness and complaisance, would not stay a moment in the house against the master's will, but gave it up to Polemo, though at midnight, and it was almost morning before he could find another lodging. This incident became known at Court, where Antoninus's mildness was not less admired than Polemo's insolence was disapproved. Hadrian, who had a great regard for Polemo, was angry and vexed at his impoliteness, and, for fear that Antoninus should resent it, he condescended to make up the matter between them, and took pains to reinstate the philosopher in the pro-consul's good graces.

Antoninus was as much beloved in Asia as he had been at Rome, and for the same reasons. He behaved with so much justice [1] and probity, and governed that province with such prudence and goodness that he eclipsed the virtues of his grandfather, who had ruled it so wisely, and was so much extolled. The Emperor heard with great joy how exceedingly Antoninus was esteemed in the East, and putting all confidence imaginable in the soundness of his judgment and advice, he recalled him to Rome, to receive the benefit of his counsel and assistance. Faustina

[1] Capitolin.

was in raptures at this. She quitted Asia with great pleasure, in order to return to Rome, where she could recommence her intrigues; in fact, she there renewed her gallantries, and the more her husband was valued for his good qualities, the more she gave loose to her vicious inclinations. Antoninus smothered in his breast the disagreeable reflections which this irregularity of his wife occasioned, and, by carrying his complaisance too far, pardoned those crimes that he ought to have punished. Whether he was incapable of the least severity, or whether he imagined it would rather increase than cure the evil, or that he hoped to conceal his dishonour by pretending to be ignorant of it, he permitted his goodness and the sweetness [1] of his temper always to intercede for Faustina, who, for her part, made a very bad use of this indulgence, and did not fail to furnish the public with ample matter for raillery and censure.

As nothing encourages vice so much as impunity and bad example, so Faustina could never have gone calmly on in such a course of life if she had found it attended with any bad consequences. Antoninus could not prevail upon himself to use severity against his wife, though she dishonoured him; Annius Verus, who was grown old and

[1] Capitolin. in Tit. Anton.

decrepit, was not in a condition to make himself much respected by his daughter; and as for Ælius Verus, her brother, instead of giving her good advice, he showed her the worst example in the world, for, as if their being born of the same mother had given them both the same inclinations, he gave himself up as entirely to debauchery as his sister. Never was man such a slave to infamous pleasures; for, not content with ordinary ones, he invented new kinds of vice, and outdid the most depraved princes in effeminacy. Among other odious monuments of his unbounded incontinence, history mentions[1] a particular sort of bed, strewn with roses and lilies, the scene of his abominations with his infamous concubines.

Fadilla, his wife, was extremely sensible of the affronts her husband put upon her, and far from being of as pacific a temper as Antoninus, her brother-in-law, she lost all patience, and railed at Verus in all the provoking language she could think of, and reproached him with his scandalous way of life and his contempt of her, who did not think herself at all inferior to any of those objects of his affection he was so fond of. In short, she worried him so much that once he told her in a great passion that he took a wife merely to maintain the honour and dignity of

[1] Spartian. in Æl. Ver.

marriage, not for any satisfaction that was to be expected in a married state; so that she ought not to be surprised if he looked for pleasure elsewhere. Thus Faustina and Verus, by their vices and infamous conduct, were a scandal to all Rome, whilst Fadilla and Antoninus, by their wise and prudent conduct, were the glory and ornament of it.

Verus's debaucheries, however, did not spoil his fortune; for Hadrian, finding himself declining every day in health, resolved to name him his successor, and adopted him. The Emperor made him prætor, Governor of Pannonia, and consul, and had so great a regard for him that a letter from this new Cæsar had more influence over him than the most earnest solicitations of any of his courtiers.

It is affirmed (notwithstanding) that Hadrian (who knew Verus to be entirely unfitted to govern the empire) never intended that he should be invested with sovereign authority, but that this adoption was the infamous price of that brutal complaisance which he showed the Emperor, who knew that Verus would never sit upon the throne, which made him say that he had adopted a god, and not a son. The result verified his prediction; for Verus died soon after, without leaving any other mark of his dignity than a pompous funeral.

Although Hadrian did not design that Verus should succeed him, yet he could not make up his mind whom to leave the empire to, till he considered the virtues and good qualities of Antoninus, and then he determined in his favour; and perceiving that his illness increased, he convoked the Senate, and declared that he adopted Titus Antoninus, and, having made his will, he appointed him his heir and successor to the throne; he added that it was[1] at the persuasion of Polemo that he was prevailed upon to make that choice, that the merit of this action might make Antoninus forgive the insult he had received from the philosopher at Smyrna. Hadrian died soon after.

Nothing could have been more agreeable to the whole world than this choice, for never had the empire a more worthy master. The first thing the new Emperor did was to express his gratitude to his benefactor by procuring him immortality. He thought he could do no less than place Hadrian among the gods, who had provided him so exalted a station upon earth. He did not, however, find it so easy a matter as he had imagined, for the late Emperor, having put to death several of the most illustrious senators, had rendered his memory odious;

[1] Philostrat. vit. Sophist.

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and far from granting him divine honours, on the contrary, they were much inclined to break all his ordinances, and destroy everything that might do him honour with posterity.

Antoninus was much afflicted at this disposition of the Senate, and endeavoured by all the arguments he was master of to give them a more favourable opinion of Hadrian; but his reasons had no great weight. He represented to them that if they revoked and annulled what Hadrian had done, it would follow that he himself could not be their Emperor, at the same time that they were expressing so much joy at his being so; "for," said he, "if you suppress the dispositions of the deceased, if you will not execute his last will, do you not thereby refuse to accept me, to whom he bequeathed the throne?" Then, on his shedding some tears, the senators were so moved that they altered their resolution, and he obtained his request; so that he who had been the tyrant of the State became a divinity.

Antoninus signalised the beginning of his reign by pardoning all those who had been condemned to death by Hadrian; for he said that it should not be in the power of anybody to reproach him with having dishonoured his accession to the throne by such odious executions. These

generous sentiments saved the lives of a great many persons, who were so many heralds to proclaim his clemency. In fact, those who had been banished were recalled, prisoners were set at liberty, sentences of death were revoked, and the Senate honoured those marks of his goodness by decreeing him the title of merciful, and the glorious name of father of the State, which no Emperor had better deserved. The same decree granted Faustina the title of August; for the Senate did not think they could well refuse the Empress the same honour they had conferred upon other princesses, however unworthy they had been of it.

Faustina's exaltation to the throne, the pompous title that had been given her, and the supreme rank with which she was honoured, required that she should live in a different manner from hitherto. She could not, without the utmost degree of shame and scandal, indulge herself in those liberties that had so much dishonoured her, and which certainly did not become an Empress, upon whose conduct the eyes of all the world were fixed; but all these considerations could not extinguish in her that invincible desire of pleasure which had obtained such an absolute empire over her heart, and obstinately resisted every reflection that tended towards a restraint of her passions.

After the new Emperor had acquitted himself of the duty he owed to the memory of his predecessor and benefactor, he displayed his magnificence and generosity to the people, among whom he distributed large sums of money; he paid the troops the legacies that Hadrian had bequeathed them, and made them considerable presents in addition. The towns of Italy and the provinces also partook of his liberality; but Faustina[1] could not help looking upon this excessive generosity of Antoninus as downright prodigality, and reproached him with it in very sharp terms.

She told him, with an air of discontent, that he ought to be satisfied with dissipating in gifts and presents the public treasure, without wasting his private fortune in needless and superfluous expenses. Nobody expected to find this wonderful economy in Faustina, who ought herself to have been a little more sparing of her favours; for, at the same time that she was so thrifty in point of money, she did not scruple to be exceedingly prodigal of her honour. Antoninus would, notwithstanding, have willingly excused her covetousness, if he could have prevailed upon her to be more chaste and virtuous; he reproved her for this low and self-interested way of thinking, and answered

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[1] Capitolin. in Anton.

that, since he was become Emperor, he had nothing he could call his own, not even his private patrimony, which was become that of the public; which remarkable words sufficiently prove the goodness of his heart and the love he had for his subjects, whom he looked upon as his own children, and, in fact, took all possible measures to make them happy. He exterminated the quadruplators, that dangerous class of people,[1] he did away with all those offices and posts that were of no manner of use to the public, as he looked upon it as unjust that the people should be burdened with those who contributed nothing to their benefit. He strictly charged all the governors of provinces not to be guilty of extortion, put none into posts of importance but persons of known probity and honour, and never undertook any war but when there was an absolute necessity for it, being much more desirous to maintain peace in the empire than to enlarge its bounds, and more solicitous about the public tranquillity than his own glory. He had continually in his mouth that remarkable sentence of Scipio the African, that it was better to save

[1] The quadruplators were so called from being entitled to the fourth part of the substance of those who were convicted of crimes upon their accusation. They did an infinite deal of mischief in Rome; for in order to enrich themselves, they made it their business to blacken the characters of those who had money.

the life of one citizen than to destroy a thousand enemies. Never did prince make so moderate a use of his power. He was easy of access, and gave everybody a hearing, not only with patience, but with the greatest condescension and affability. No person whatever was forbidden to approach him; he listened attentively to the poor and unfortunate, without pride or haughtiness, for nobody had occasion to bribe any of his courtiers to procure an audience: the doors of his palace were open to everyone, and never had favourites fewer opportunities of squeezing money out of the people than during the reign of Antoninus.

But of all his good qualities none were more conspicuous than his mildness and sweetness of temper. He never was known to revenge an injury, so that those who had the most grievously offended him had nothing to fear from his resentment. He gave Polemo, who had treated him so brutally at Smyrna, an instance of this extraordinary moderation. The professor, being informed that Antoninus was on the throne, went to Rome to congratulate him upon his accession. His arrival put everybody in mind of the insolence with which he had refused his house to Antoninus, when he went there to exercise his pro-consulship; and people expected that, if it was possible for him ever to show any tokens of his displeasure, it would be to a man who had so grossly

affronted him; but Antoninus, who was perfect master of himself, and looked upon revenge as a poor low passion, received Polemo with great marks of esteem and consideration; he even embraced him tenderly, lodged him in a handsome and convenient apartment in his own palace, and, in a joking manner, gave orders that it should be such a one that he should run no risk of being turned out of it. By this agreeable and ingenious raillery Antoninus was minded to let the philosopher see that he had not forgotten his incivility, though he had forgiven it; and showed that, if he did not express any signs of his displeasure, it was not to be attributed to stupidity, or his being insensible to insults, but to his heroic virtue and nobleness of soul. This rare example of meekness, at the same time that it secured him the affection of the Senate and people, served as a lesson to all those about him; for he would never have mentioned this affair at all had it not been to instruct others how they should behave in the like cases; he brought it in very opportunely upon another occasion, when an actor, who had been driven out of the theatre by Polemo, came to complain to him. The Emperor asked what time of the day it was when this happened; the other answered, "At noon." "I," said the Emperor, "was turned out at midnight, and never complained at all."

Antoninus had reigned three years, with all the wisdom and goodness that has been described, which made him a blessing to all the world, for which he was justly called the "delight of mankind," when his wife, Faustina, died in the thirty-seventh year of her age. Her debaucheries, which had caused the Emperor so much vexation, would, one would think, have furnished him with reasons for consolation. He, nevertheless, regretted this Empress, in spite of her infamous behaviour.

He caused all the honours that had been granted to the preceding Empresses to be conferred upon her, and placed her among the gods, where the Senate had already introduced the Agrippinas and Messalinas. Rupilia Faustina, her mother, was yet alive, and received the compliments of condolence usual upon those occasions. She had the satisfaction of seeing the Emperor, her son-in-law, doing particular honour to the memory of Faustina; for Antoninus, not content with causing her to be immortalised, and dedicating the most sumptuous games in honour of her, built a temple, which he filled with the statues of this new divinity, and being resolved to grant her extraordinary privileges, he ordered that her image should be solemnly carried in procession to the shows that were exhibited in the Circus.

After the Emperor had paid the last tribute to the

memory of his wife, by all the honours that could be thought of, he employed himself entirely in State affairs. He repaired old buildings, and erected new ones. He relieved the provinces, that had been afflicted with the plague, famine, and earthquakes, especially Cyzicus, whose famous temple (the grandest and most magnificent building in the world) had lately been thrown down.[1] He also rebuilt, at his own expense, the houses that had been burnt down at Carthage, Narbonne, and Antioch; so that it may be said that there was no province where some monuments of his liberality, compassion, or magnificence were not to be seen.

Never was prince so great a lover of peace, and at the same time so formidable. The most distant people thought themselves happy in being under his protection and owning him for their sovereign lord, so much were they captivated with his uprightness and the mildness of his government. His power extended to the remotest

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[1] Cyzicus was one of the most remarkable towns in Greece, both for size and beauty. It was situated on an island in the Propontis, and had a communication with the Continent by two bridges. It was famous for its marble fortresses and towers; but most of all for the temple, which was an astonishing piece of work, far surpassing anything that was to be seen in Asia for its size and magnificence. The pillars were fifty cubits high, and each made out of an entire stone. The island is still celebrated for its marbles.

corners of the earth. His name was revered and respected by all the Kings in alliance with the Roman Empire, even strangers and barbarians; so that he maintained peace and tranquillity in the world more by his reputation alone, than his predecessors had done by force of arms.

One of the greatest benefits he could possibly have conferred upon mankind was to instil virtuous notions into the mind of Marcus Aurelius, whom he had adopted, and who was to succeed him, jointly with Lucius Verus, pursuant to Hadrian's will. He therefore took care to choose for him such tutors as had the greatest reputation, and sent to Chalcis for the celebrated Apollonius, whose pride and arrogance furnished Antoninus with an opportunity of showing his extreme goodness. That philosopher, being arrived at Rome, took up his lodging in a private house, instead of going directly to the palace. The Emperor being told that he was come, sent for him in order to commit the education of his adopted son to his care, but Apollonius, full of his surly philosophy, and looking sternly at the Emperor's messenger, told him that it was not the duty of the master to go and wait upon the scholar, but the pupil's to go and pay his respects to his master. Antoninus was not at all offended at this impertinent and ridiculous vanity, but laughed at it, saying he was surprised that this great philosopher should not

have found out that it was not quite so far from his lodging to the palace as from Chalcis to Rome.

It may be taken for granted that such a prince as Antoninus (since he took so much care of his adopted son's education) did not neglect that of his daughter Faustina, but he did not find in her the same good disposition as in the other, for Marcus Aurelius copied Antoninus, whereas Faustina unhappily trod in the steps of her mother.

We shall see by the sequel that she carried her lasciviousness and shamelessness as far as it could possibly go. Antoninus had not the mortification of seeing it, for he died in the twenty-third year of his reign, after having governed the empire with so much wisdom, justice, moderation, and glory that it might more fitly be said of him than of Trajan or Augustus that he should either never have been born, or should never have died. Towards the latter end of his life he issued that famous decree that St. Augustine has so much commended, by which husbands were forbidden to accuse their wives of adultery when they were themselves guilty of the same crime; and which subjected the men, when they offended in that way, to the same penalties that were incurred by women of that character. Never was Emperor so much regretted by his subjects, who had all of them so high an

idea of his honour and integrity that the most remote and barbarous princes thought themselves happy when they could prevail upon him to be the arbitrator of their differences, in which cases his opinion and judgment was always regarded as final.

FAUSTINA THE YOUNGER,

WIFE OF MARCUS AURELIUS

MEN's love and study of philosophy is not always what procures them the esteem and affection of their wives; on the contrary, it has often been the case that too much gravity and studiousness in a husband has been the occasion of his spouse's infidelity, and who knows whether the younger Faustina would have carried her irregularities to so great a length if her husband had been less a philosopher? She was the daughter of Titus Antoninus, as we have before mentioned, and in her father she had the most perfect model of virtue, but her headstrong passions and the violence of her temperament hurried her away, in spite of the best instruction and example. It is generally vain and fruitless to attempt to counteract Nature, so Faustina, who was born with vitiated and depraved inclinations, imitated the vices of her mother, as if it had been decreed that all of that name were to be utterly shameless. If the face can be reckoned a true image of the soul, no great prudence or discretion

was to be expected from this princess, for her physiognomy seemed to foretell her natural humour and disposition.[1] She had a small head, a somewhat prominent face, a long neck, small but very lively eyes, and a giddy, thoughtless look. She was incapable of reflection or modesty, and never allowed the rules of decency to enter into rivalry with her own humour and inclinations, so that few women have carried their debauchery and shamelessness to such an excess. It is certain that the fact of Marcus Aurelius not giving himself much trouble about her conduct, and the too great complaisance he always exhibited towards her, contributed not a little to her scandalous behaviour, for an unrestrained indulgence has generally that unhappy effect. A husband who resolves to shut his eyes against all his wife's failings betrays himself, for it is not at all safe or prudent to give too much liberty to some women, who make no other use of it but to dishonour themselves and all who belong to them.

When the Emperor Hadrian adopted Antoninus, he ordered that he should give Faustina his daughter to Verus; but, as soon as Hadrian was dead, Antoninus, thinking[2] there was too great a disproportion between

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[1] Spon. recher. curi. d'antiquité.

[2] Capitolin. in Marc. Aurel.

his daughter's age and that of Verus, acted quite contrary to Hadrian's intention, and decided to marry her to Marcus Aurelius, though he was already betrothed to Ceionia, daughter of Lucius Ceionius Commodus.

Marcus Aurelius belonged to one of the best families in Rome, being descended from Numa Pompilius, whose wisdom and goodness he imitated. His first name was Annius Verus, but as soon as he was adopted he took the name of Marcus Aurelius. His ancestors had always held considerable rank in the Senate, but his personal virtues rendered him infinitely more illustrious than his birth, or his connections by marriage, who included all persons of quality and distinction at Rome. In him were to be seen all manner of good qualities, without any faults. From his childhood he was inclined to be grave, moderate, and liberal, and preserved, even in the exercise of the sovereign power and all the splendour that attends it, his simplicity of manner. He passed the greatest part of his youth in the study of the Stoic philosophy, and continually conversed with people of that profession: he even affected their sedate and serious air, and imitated them in the minutest things, not disdaining to wear (after their example) the long cloak, in which he was not ashamed to appear in public, for which reason he was always styled "the philosopher." He greatly injured his health by too

close application to study, and the many disorders which he complained of all his life were to be attributed to it.

As soon as Hadrian was dead, Antoninus adopted Marcus Aurelius, and at the same time resolved to marry him to his daughter, though she had been intended for Verus. Faustina, the mother, proposed this to Marcus Aurelius; and, as he was not a man to do things rashly, but, on the contrary, weighed and considered all his actions, he desired time to think of it. Antoninus, however, gave him the title of Cæsar, initiated him into the College of Salian Priests, appointed him consul for the next year, and, in short, heaped upon him all those honours that were usually bestowed upon such as were intended to succeed to the throne. All this made no impression upon Marcus Aurelius, who had so imbibed the maxims of the Stoics that he was quite insensible to honours that were sufficient to gratify the most unlimited ambition; and, making his whole pleasure consist in his philosophy, he gave himself up entirely to it.

The time being expired that he had asked before he could determine about the marriage, he accepted with gratitude the honour of being the Emperor's son-in-law, and married the Princess Faustina. The nuptials were celebrated with all possible magnificence, and the Emperor displayed upon this occasion his great

generosity and bounty. But what in due time completed their happiness was the birth of the Princess Lucilla, whom Faustina was delivered of, and as this more endeared him to the Emperor, he had new dignities conferred upon him. He was created tribune, with the power of pro-consul, which last office, far from making him arrogant, rendered him if possible more meek and humble; and he behaved with as much duty and respect to Antoninus as if he had been his own son. There never was so beautiful a union between a father and son-in-law, who made it their whole study and occupation to give each other reciprocal tokens of their esteem and affection.

There were not wanting, according to custom, many envious people, that could not bear this happy agreement, as they imagined that Marcus Aurelius's favour and influence with the Emperor eclipsed theirs.

There are always in Courts corrupt and mischievous flatterers, who think to advance their own fortune by insinuating themselves into the good graces of the Prince at the expense of other people's reputations, pretending to be more zealous than ordinary for his interests; and it is next to impossible for the best of kings to be always upon their guard against the venom of this dangerous class of people. Valerius Omulus was one of this

character. This artful and wicked courtier, who had the Emperor's ear, never failed to take advantage of the frequent opportunities he had of endeavouring to create mistrust and jealousy in Antoninus with regard to Marcus Aurelius; and whenever it was in his power to put a malicious construction upon any actions of him or his family he was sure to do it.

Cunning and imposture were the more dangerous in him, as he had a great deal of cleverness, and knew how to give weight to mere trifles; he also possessed the secret of employing raillery with great success, in order to gain his point; but under pretence of mirth and joking, his way was to give mortal stabs to those whom he had a mind to injure. Omulus adopted this method to give the Emperor a bad impression of his son-in-law. Domitia Calvilla, Marcus Aurelius's mother (a lady who prided herself upon her wisdom and piety towards the gods) went regularly every day to pay her devotions before an image of Apollo, that was in her garden. She was performing this duty one day, when the Emperor and Omulus saw her at the feet of this statue in a very humble posture. Omulus, perceiving the Emperor looking very attentively at Domitia, would fain have put a bad construction upon this attitude of hers, which he ought rather to have commended. He insinuated to Antoninus that his death

was what she was begging from the god with so much earnestness; then, turning towards the Emperor, with a malicious smile, "It is not difficult," said he, "to guess at the petition Domitia is offering up to Apollo; it can be nothing but your death that she is requesting, in order to procure the empire for her son."

Antoninus, whose prudence and natural goodness would not suffer him readily to entertain an ill opinion of anybody, did not fall into the snare that was laid for him, nor did he in the least alter his conduct towards Calvilla or Marcus Aurelius; so that the perfidious courtier had no other satisfaction than that of having discharged a malicious arrow with no other results than revealing his odious character. This is very often the only fruit that such base flatterers and parasites reap from their diabolical attempts to do ill offices to innocent people.

Titus Antoninus being dead, the Senate (agreeing with him as to the merit of Marcus Aurelius) declared him sole Emperor; but he, being a religious observer of his word, would not fail in the promise he had made to Hadrian to take Lucius Verus as his colleague in the empire; he accordingly did so, and, though he had but a very indifferent opinion of this prince, he thought himself obliged to declare him his colleague, gave him the title of Cæsar

and August, and from that time promoted the match between him and his daughter Lucilla.

It was then that the empire had, for the first time, two Emperors, who governed in concert with equal authority, for till that time the sovereign authority had been always lodged in one single person. Marcus Aurelius was very well pleased to divide both the honour and the fatigue of rule with Verus, that he might be more at leisure to indulge his favourite passion, the study of philosophy. In fact, he cultivated it upon the throne with the same assiduity as when he was a private person, nor did he think it at all inconsistent with his dignity to frequent the Academies, and to take Lucius Verus, as his colleague in the empire; he accordingly did so, and listened with great attention to the lessons of such philosophers as were of high reputation, whence he returned filled with the maxims of the most austere virtue and wisdom.

This was not at all suitable to Faustina's taste, whose coquettish and lively disposition could but ill relish such serious conduct,—she, who could not live but in the midst of pleasures and diversions. Accordingly, whilst Marcus Aurelius was amusing himself in his study with his philosophical pursuits, she (unmindful of her birth and dignity) was giving full scope to her vicious inclinations;

and the Emperor, too much taken up with his meditations, troubled himself but very little about his wife's behaviour, who knew so well how to make the most of this supine indolence, that she was resolved to deny herself nothing. The Emperor Verus was not less complaisant to his passions and desires than Faustina, and in all his actions showed the vast difference there was between him and his father-in-law; but the misfortunes which, at that time, afflicted Rome and the empire, roused him at last from his diversions and pleasures. The Tiber overflowed the city, destroyed the finest buildings, and swamped all the country. In addition there was a dreadful famine and plague; and, as if all the judgments of Heaven were united to punish the Romans, the Parthians, after having driven out of Syria Atidius Cornelianus the Governor, openly declared war, which they had been meditating for many years past.

The Emperors applied themselves with vigour to repair the loss and damage occasioned by the inundation, the scarcity, and the pestilence; and after having sent experienced generals and troops against those barbarians, and the inhabitants of Britain, who had also revolted, it was agreed that Verus in person should take a journey into Syria, to chastise the Parthians for their rebellion, and that Marcus Aurelius should remain at

Rome, where his presence was necessary. The Senate authorised all these resolutions.

Marcus Aurelius accompanied his colleague as far as Capua, and then returned to Rome, but being soon after informed that Verus was taken ill at Canusium, he ordered the Senate to offer vows for his recovery, went himself to pay him a visit, and did not quit him till he was well enough to proceed on his journey to Syria. About this time Faustina was brought to bed of the Princess Fadilla, whom Caracalla afterwards put to death, and of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. She had afterwards another daughter, called Justina, who died young, according to some historians, but others say she lived long enough to imitate her mother. As for Faustina the Younger, she exactly copied Messalina in her shameful and most infamous behaviour, so that it would be difficult for one who has the least regard for decency and good manners to mention such things without horror. I know, however, that the rules of history oblige him who writes it to report the vices as well as the virtues of those whose lives he undertakes to give an account of. For my part, I wish I were able to report with more circumspection, and in terms more consistent with modesty, these horrible and shocking crimes; but yet, if too thick a veil be thrown over the meaning of an author, it is entirely

hidden. After all, when one has read the history of Messalina, Julia, and Agrippina, there will be no great room for being surprised at any thing that can be met with in that of Faustina, who trod in their steps; for, while Marcus Aurelius was shut up in his study, contriving the best means to humble the enemies of the empire, or indulging his philosophical tastes, the Empress his wife was abandoning herself entirely to the gratification of her appetites by the most scandalous behaviour. The confidence she had in the Emperor's goodness encouraged her to dishonour him by the most horrible libertinism. She was not content with procuring gallants of quality and distinction, and bestowing upon them those favours which her too studious husband neglected, but gave herself up to all comers, so that her prostitutions became quite public; and having by degrees brought matters to such a pass that she blushed for nothing, and being not in the least afraid of her husband, who seemed insensible of her conduct, she gratified without restraint her infamous inclinations.

Orfitus, Utilius, Moderatus, and Tertullus were some of her lovers, who lived with her in a disgraceful intimacy.

The public, which observes every step that is taken by persons of high rank, was thoroughly acquainted with

Faustina's debauches. The eyes of all the world were upon her; and scandal, which spares neither nobility nor dignity, grandeur nor authority, was not more indulgent to the Empress than to other people. Marcus Aurelius could not but be informed of these excesses of his wife, for it would have been impossible for the gallantries of Faustina (who set so small a value upon her reputation) to escape his knowledge. At least, he must have known of her intrigue with Tertullus, as he surprised them together one day at dinner; and so great a familiarity must needs have given him to understand that they had had meetings more secret and more criminal. He had even the mortification to see that his wife's imprudence furnished matter of ridicule to the theatre; for one day, when the Emperor was there,[1] the actors had the rashness and assurance to introduce this subject upon the stage, and acquaint him with his wife's prostitutions to his face, which would have been a very dangerous attempt under a less mild Emperor than Marcus Aurelius, and in all likelihood the comedy would have had a tragical end; for an actor, who represented a stupid husband, enquiring of his slave what was the name of his wife's gallant, the slave named him three times, and said it was

[1] Jul. Capitolin. in Marc. Anton.

Tullus; but the husband, who pretended not to have heard him, repeating the same question, he answered it was Tertullus.[1]

Marcus Aurelius certainly stood in need of all his philosophy, and all he could do was to endure his shame and vexation in secret; so, affecting to know nothing of his wife's gallantries (though she took so little pains to conceal them), he was put to a severe trial.

In the meantime, whether the rigid maxims of the Stoic philosophy or the rules of policy absolutely required that he should pretend ignorance upon this occasion, he certainly continued to give his wife such tokens of his love and affection as she was little worthy of, and having a mind to justify his insensibility on so tender a point, he undertook to impose on posterity by making believe that he had the best opinion in the world of his wife, and protesting in his moral reflections[2] that he looked upon his having a wife of so good a character to be a particular favour of the gods. But unluckily this was a useless precaution, for the reputation of the Empress Faustina was incapable of defence.

Verus did not behave with more discretion in Syria

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[1] i.e., Ter-tullus, "thrice Tullus."

[2] Marc. Aurel. Antonin. op. de. seip

than Faustina did at Rome, and we shall see presently that his conduct did not give his colleague less trouble and vexation. However, the Roman generals under him[1] managed so successfully that they beat the enemy. Verus did not fail to claim all the merit of it, and when the war was at an end he appointed Avidius Cassius Governor of Syria, whose bad and suspicious behaviour soon gave Verus reason to mistrust him, and he wrote to Marcus Aurelius to let him know that in Cassius they had a very dangerous enemy to fear.

Whether it was that the Emperor's philosophical maxims made him think himself independent of Fortune, and that the decrees of Providence were inevitable, or that he imagined this information was only the ill-grounded suspicions of a person who thinks of nothing but his pleasures, he answered his colleague that, if the gods had so ordered it that Cassius was to be Emperor, it was not in the power of man to reverse their decrees, and that it was better to submit with patience than attempt a resistance that would be in vain. In this way of reasoning there might be a good deal of philosophy, but very little truth or policy; and accordingly we shall soon see that when Cassius openly revolted, Marcus Aurelius did

[1] Capitolin. in Ver.

not look upon it in that light, and that his submission to the gods was not so blind and passive as it appeared.

In the meantime Verus adorned his brows with the laurels that others had won, and received at Rome the honour of a triumph which was the reward of a victory he had had no hand in, notwithstanding all his boasting. He there continued his horrible debaucheries, with which he had corrupted all the towns in Syria; nothing like it had ever been seen, and when we come to read in the following chapter of the actions of that prince, it will appear that no injustice was done him when he was compared to Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, the worst of emperors. His incontinence respected nobody, for he lived in a criminal intimacy with Faustina, his mother-in-law, and was not ashamed to defile the bed of Marcus Aurelius, his father-in-law and benefactor, by a shameful incest and odious ingratitude. This disgraceful intercourse between Verus and Faustina cannot indeed be doubted, when we consider that he was invested with sovereign authority, and that he was incapable of setting any bounds to his infamous passions, while Faustina had neither shame nor modesty, so that they both burnt with the same flame. It is said that Verus, far from making a mystery of this intrigue, was very proud of it, and even could not forbear boasting of it to his wife.

Lucilla was strangely surprised to find that her mother was her rival; for though she well knew that Faustina lived a strange life, she did not imagine that she could possibly carry her irregularities so far as to have an amour with her son-in-law. She was so exasperated that she could not control her anger and jealousy; and, forgetting the respect she owed her mother, she reproached her bitterly with her scandalous behaviour with Verus. There are some crimes of such a nature that those who are guilty of them cannot bear to be thought so, be they never so shameless; and a woman must be a monster if she does not show some little signs of bashfulness when she is reproached with her crimes; thus Faustina, long as she had been accustomed to vice, had not the assurance to endure her daughter's just indignation, but on the contrary was covered with shame and confusion; she further conceived such an implacable hatred to Verus that his death was afterwards attributed to this piece of indiscretion, and reckoned the effects of Faustina's revenge.

If Marcus Aurelius was really acquainted with all these things, it must be acknowledged that they afforded him as good an opportunity as he could have desired to exercise his philosophy, and that his being able to endure it could have been owing to nothing less than his being a downright Stoic. He maintained his character, however,

always appeared insensible of his misfortune, and seemed not to perceive what all Rome saw plainly enough. This over-strained complaisance (not to say stupidity) only served to encourage the Empress in her vicious habits, and embolden her to commit those abominations in which she indulged herself at Gaieta in the kingdom of Naples, so called from Gaieta Æneas's nurse who died there.[1] Marcus Aurelius went thither upon some occasion, and Faustina accompanied him. There it was[2] that she abandoned herself to such prostitutions as would scarce be believed, were it not so well attested by the most credible authors as to leave no room for doubt.

It was no longer to senators and knights only that she was so liberal of her favours (that would have been an insupportable restraint): it was now men of the vilest condition, the most abject and contemptible, that were the objects of her depraved inclinations; for, as she was no longer curbed by any rules of shame or decency, she kept no sort of restraint, but put up, as it were, her honour to auction. She did not blush to be seen publicly in the amphitheatres and on the quays, where she caused

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[1] Tu quoque litoribus nostris, Aeneia nutrix.
Aeternam moriens famam, Caieta, dedisti.—VIRGIL, AENEID, vii. 1, 2.

[2] Capitolin. in Marc. Aurel. Victor.

numbers of sailors and gladiators to pass quite naked in review before her, and singled out such as she liked best. She thus obliged the whole empire to be witness of her shameless debaucheries,[1] for neither the obscenity of this spectacle, nor any reflection, nor motives of shame or decency were strong enough to stop the fury of her unparalleled impudence, or set bounds to her lasciviousness. Never had vice been seen that could be compared to this. It was during these debauches, and during this miscellaneous intercourse, that Faustina became with child, and nothing but corrupt fruit could be expected from a pregnancy that was the consequence of such scandalous proceedings. The Empress's dream did not a little contribute to strengthen the general suspicion, and seemed to foretell the devilish nature of the child that was to be born. She dreamed that she was delivered of two serpents, one of which was more venomous than the other; and this fatal presage was but too well verified, to the great misfortune of the empire. Faustina was delivered of twins, one of which was Commodus, the scourge of mankind; the other was Antonius, who in all probability would not have deserved a better character if he had lived. Commodus's depraved nature,

[1] Capitolin. in Marc. Anton. Aurel. Victor.

the mischievousness of his heart, his corrupt inclinations, and his exceeding great love of shows and gladiators, made people believe (and with good reason), that Marcus Aurelius was not his father, but rather one of those gladiators that had partaken of the Empress's favours. I know that there are authors who, to palliate the crimes of Faustina, or to save the honour of the Emperor (about which, as about her own, she was so little solicitous), have invented a fabulous account of this pregnancy of Faustina. They say that Faustina, having seen a handsome gladiator, became mightily smitten with him. This passion threw her into a state of melancholy which alarmed Marcus Aurelius. So good a husband could not possibly neglect to procure his wife the medicine that was proper to cure her; he asked her then the cause of her illness, and was informed that it was occasioned by her love for this gladiator. This sort of distemper a little disconcerted the philosophical phlegm of the Emperor, and because the remedy which he saw she was desirous of concerned his honour a little too much, he consulted the Chaldæans as to what was to be done, told them the nature of her indisposition, and requested them to employ their art on this occasion. These wise people were of opinion that the gladiator, who had caused the Empress's disorder, should have his throat cut, and that the Empress

should drink his blood. Marcus Aurelius was obliged to consent to this prescription, and also to contribute his part to the cure; for part of the ceremony was that he should go to bed with the Empress after she had drunk the bloody potion. Everything was done accordingly, and with great success; but because the imagination of Faustina had been warmed by her idea of the gladiator, she conceived Commodus, who in consequence had always the inclinations of a gladiator. It is true that the historian who relates this says it was only a report that did not gain much credit; nor is it indeed very likely that Faustina should be so scrupulous as to languish for love of a gladiator.

It is wonderful that Marcus Aurelius, who was so great an admirer of virtue, and who was well acquainted with his wife's prostitutions, should have been able to dissemble so long, and that he should not have reflected that, by neglecting to punish such horrible disorders, he made himself an accomplice in them, and was liable for his share of the disgrace. Besides, he could not doubt but all Rome was well acquainted with his wife's scandalous behaviour, for among his courtiers there were some who had his honour and interests so much at heart as to take the liberty of reproaching him with his impolitic silence. They represented to him the infamy

with which Faustina dishonoured his family, and the insults she inflicted upon her husband and her Emperor; then they declared that such abominations demanded that she should be made an example of, since to pretend ignorance in this case was to authorise her proceedings; that so unseasonable a clemency was a shameful weakness, that Faustina had justly forfeited a life she had sullied with innumerable adulteries, prostitutions and debaucheries; and, in short, that if he could not prevail upon himself to put Antoninus's daughter to death, he ought at least to divorce her, since she had not been ashamed to dishonour their marriage by the most scandalous and most punishable transgression.

Marcus Aurelius heard all this with indifference, and answered coldly that, if he must needs part with Faustina, he could not avoid restoring her portion; meaning that, having received the empire from the liberality of Antoninus, who at the same time gave him his daughter, he could not, consistently with justice and gratitude, put her away without giving her the empire which she had procured him. This answer silenced his advisers, for none after that would give themselves any trouble about it; so, Faustina, being persuaded that the Emperor's great respect for Antoninus would always protect her against the treatment she deserved, went on in

the same way, and continued to live as she had hitherto done: so true is it that, where there is no fear of punishment, there is nothing to restrain vice.

The Emperor Verus also continued the same course of debaucheries; but the rebellion of the Marcomanni interrupted his infamous pleasures, for the revolt of those barbarians was of such importance as to alarm Rome, and Marcus Aurelius, in spite of his philosophy, was extremely perplexed. He omitted none of those pagan superstitions that were practised in those days in order to render the gods propitious; but as it was to impotent divinities that he addressed his vows, he was obliged to prepare for his defence, and to look for that succour from force and the courage of his legions, which his sacrilegious offerings could not obtain from his gods. The Marcomanni in the meantime horribly ravaged the provinces, and at the same time the plague raged in Rome, and daily swept away vast numbers of people. Marcus Aurelius did all that was possible to put a stop to the terrible effects of this dreadful calamity, and, after having given the necessary orders to relieve them, he set out with his colleague at the head of his army for Aquileia. The approach of the Emperors, who had made great preparations for this war, intimidated the barbarians, and detached from their alliance some of the

neighbouring princes whom the rebels had won over to their interests, and at the same time the Quadi, having lost their King, declared that they would have no other but such as the Emperors were pleased to give them. Verus, who was deprived of his pleasures by this journey, and had only quitted Rome with a great deal of regret, longed to return thither. He represented to Marcus Aurelius that, the war being at an end, there were no more enemies to fight; and that such a dangerous sickness had attacked the army as would soon utterly destroy it if they were not soon put into quarters. Marcus Aurelius, who weighed and considered things in a very different manner, was very cautious how he yielded to his colleague's reasons and pretences, and told him that it was very probable this pretended submission of the barbarians was only an artifice to get the army disbanded, in order to make sure of their work as soon as that was done. Verus, who could not avoid showing deference to the opinion of his father-in-law, was forced to give up the point; but as soon as they had passed the Alps, Verus, who had no liking for the fatigues of war, and the further he got from Rome, the more he wished to return thither, used so many arguments with Marcus Aurelius that at last he prevailed upon him to suspend operations, and go and consult with the Senate about the most suitable measures to be pursued.

It was in the beginning of winter that they set out again for Rome, and with the same equipment, but between the towns of Concordia and Altinum, Verus was seized with an apoplectic fit, which carried him off.

Marcus Aurelius continued his journey to Rome, where he caused a superb funeral to be prepared for his colleague. He procured him the honour of immortality, and gave the most debauched man that ever existed a rank among the gods. This done, he resolved to reduce the barbarians, and marched against them with a formidable army. That of the rebels was no less so, being much more numerous; for besides the Marcomanni, there were large bodies of Germans, Quadi, and Vandals. To those were joined the Sarmatians, and the Iazygans—people accustomed to the fatigues of war, used to all sorts of hardships, and as irreconcileable enemies to the Romans as the Marcomanni themselves, against whom Marcus Aurelius had assembled all his forces, which indeed were much diminished by the plague. The Emperor's skiiful management, however, supplied this defect; so that he was victorious over the barbarians. This astonished but did not discourage them, for, urged on by their despair, they exerted their whole strength, and resolved to make a last effort. And certainly it may be affirmed that never was the Roman empire in so great peril.

The Roman army that was in the territories of the Quadi, being unfortunately encamped in a very disadvantageous situation, the barbarians besieged it.[1] The Romans were shut in by mountains, ditches and defiles, and could not possibly extricate themselves without yielding at discretion to the enemy, who reckoned upon destroying them without striking a blow. Among the Romans there were a great number of soldiers wounded, and many that were infected with the plague, which spread more and more, and made terrible havoc. Their misery was still more increased by the excessive heat, from which, and the want of water, both men and horses suffered extremely, so that it looked as if all the evils that could be imagined were united to ruin the army. The barbarians, who suffered from none of these inconveniences, and who were well informed of the miserable condition of the Romans, felt sure of a complete victory, and that without losing a man; since they imagined that the Romans could not but be undone by being so hemmed n, and took it for granted that their distressed condition would compel them to surrender.

Marcus Aurelius was never in so much perplexity, and did not fail to implore the protection of all the tutelary

[1] Dio. lib. 71.

gods of Rome; but these prayers were without success. As this was the greatest danger the troops had ever been in, the Emperor was extremely embarrassed, but in the midst of his perplexity a captain of the Prætorian Cohorts reminded him that in the army there was one legion entirely composed of Christians, who did not worship the Roman divinities, and that he saw no reason why, in this case of extreme necessity, application should not be made to them to invoke the God of the Christians, and supplicate from him that help which they stood so much in need of, for that no means ought to be neglected. Marcus Aurelius immediately sent for the officers of that legion, and entreated them to beseech the God whom they served to deliver them from their extreme peril. They did so, and were heard: for the Almighty, willing to manifest His power in favour of those who called upon His name, afforded them the assistance they so earnestly prayed for. Scarce had they finished their devotions, when the sky, which till then had been very clear and serene, suddenly became dark, and soon after, the Romans had the unspeakable satisfaction of feeling an abundant shower of rain fall upon their camp, which cooled the air and supplied them plentifully with water for the soldiers and the cattle, which were ready to expire with thirst and at the same time there fell upon the barbarians such

violent hail, accompanied with dreadful thunder and lightning, that they were struck with a panic and fled, abandoning their camp and baggage to the Romans, who pursued them and slaughtered most of their army. Marcus Aurelius acknowledged that this miraculous delivery was owing to the prayers of the Christians, honoured that legion with the glorious surname of Thundering, and showed a great esteem for the Christians ever after.

I know that the enemies of the Christian religion, in order to weaken as much as they can the truth of this event, or attribute it to any other cause than the above mentioned, give out that the escape of the Romans was owing to the enchantments of the magician Arnulphus; and some flatterers, to pay their court to the Emperor, spread it abroad that the gods had shown them that peculiar favour out of regard to Marcus Aurelius's piety. We leave it to the reader to examine the authors and historians that write of this fact, where he will meet with arguments enough to refute these idle dreams.

This important victory greatly increased Marcus Aurelius's glory and reputation, and made him a terror to the barbarians. The legions proclaimed him Imperator with loud acclamations, a title they were accustomed to give their generals after a notable victory, which in this

sense had a different meaning from what the word usually imports; but he would not accept the honour, though he had deserved it so well, till after the Senate had confirmed it to him by a solemn decree, which also bestowed upon him the title of Germanicus. They could not indeed do too much for an Emperor for whom no reward was too great, especially considering how they had prostituted the most honourable and high-sounding titles to the basest and most unworthy tyrants. But if, on the one hand, they justly heaped honours upon Marcus Aurelius, on the other it must be owned that Faustina, to whom the Senate was also very liberal in that respect, was not in the least worthy of them. For whilst the Emperor honoured the throne by his virtues, the care he took to defend the empire, and the many victories that were due to his skill, Faustina gave herself up without reserve to her brutal pleasures, and became the shame and disgrace of the empire by her infamous prostitutions. The Senate, however, bestowed upon her all the honours they could think of, and decreed her the proud title of "mother of the armies." They likewise struck a medal with this inscription (Divæ Faustinæ August. Castror. consecratio), when at the same time she deserved the utmost contempt instead of honours. The barbarians were in such consternation at their loss that Marcus

Aurelius would in all likelihood have entirely subdued them, and would have reduced their country to a Roman province, if the news of the revolt of Cassius, who had caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor in Syria, had not obliged him to march against that rebel, who, for a long time past, had ardently desired to mount the throne, and who had his spies at Rome. The Emperor then perceived that Verus's suspicions were not groundless, and that in Cassius he had indeed a dangerous rival. This revolt made it necessary for him to make peace with the Germans upon as reasonable terms as could be had, so, deferring to another opportunity the more effectual humbling of those people, he determined in the first place to fight Cassius.

Avidius Cassius was descended from the famous family of that name, which was very distinguished during the republican period of Rome, and was extremely jealous of its liberties. He inherited that hatred which his ancestors had shown upon all occasions against such as assumed excessive power. Cassius was an odd mixture of virtues and vices very opposite to each other. He was sometimes severe and cruel, and at other times humane, mild and polite. Sometimes he affected great piety and devotion towards the gods, and soon after showed a thorough contempt even for what was most sacred in

religion. On certain days he wallowed in wine, and carried his debauchery to the greatest excess, and then again he would live in the other extreme; so that this mixture of good and bad qualities caused him to be compared to Catiline, and he was rather pleased than otherwise when people gave him that name. He was so strict an observer of military discipline that it might rather be called cruelty than strictness, for he punished the smallest crimes most rigorously. Marcus Aurelius, who looked upon him as a man capable of doing good service and of keeping the troops to their duty, gave him very important posts, in which he had always acquitted himself well, and to reward him for his good behaviour, made him Governor of all Syria, where, after he had made all his preparations, he thought proper to rebel against his Emperor and benefactor.

It is reported that he was excited thereto by Faustina, because this Empress, in whom the love of pleasure had not extinguished that of power, imagining that Marcus Aurelius, being frequently sick, had not long to live, and being desirous of finding some able protector who might be a friend to her and her children in case of accidents, and even secure the throne to herself, thought nothing could more effectually do this than a suitable alliance; and she was persuaded that in the whole empire she could not

have selected anybody more capable of answering her purpose than Cassius, whose exploits had procured him the highest reputation. With this view it is said she wrote to him to seize the empire as soon as he should hear of the Emperor's death, and promised to marry him. But it is not at all probable that Faustina ever had any such design, for besides that, in reality, she never showed any tokens of ambition (as her capital vice lay another way), her letters to Marcus Aurelius, wherein she exhorts him never to pardon Cassius or his accomplices, sufficiently clear her of that crime. It is more likely that Cassius, suffering himself to be hurried on by his foolish hopes, and being at the head of a considerable army, beloved by his troops, much respected in Syria, and prompted by his ambition and the sycophants that surrounded him, gave out that Marcus Aurelius was dead. Whether he really believed it was so, or that by this false report he desired to induce the army to choose themselves a master, it is certain that he flattered himself with being able to seize the empire.

The news of this revolt caused Marcus Aurelius considerable annoyance. Cassius's great reputation, the high esteem he enjoyed among the troops as well as in the provinces, and the affection the army had for him, rendered him very formidable. The Emperor at first kept it very

secret, but perceiving that his men were already forming themselves into parties, he resolved to conceal it no longer, and having assembled the legions, told them that it was not so much his design to break out into complaints and show his resentment against his enemies as to express his grief at being engaged in a civil war, and at finding himself betrayed by a man who had been always faithful to him hitherto, and whom he had never offended.

"What friendship," said he,[1] "can for the future be safe from treason, or what virtue secure? If this revolt were only against me I should despise it, and scarcely think it worth my while to trouble myself about it, but it is more against you than me that he turns his arms; he attacks the State and we cannot defend it without shedding the blood of the citizens. As for me, my dear companions, though I am exposed to dangers in foreign countries, remote from Rome and my family, loaded with years and infirmities, I shall neither spare pain nor care to make Cassius return to his allegiance; it remains with you to do your part. The victory depends upon your behaviour. Let us consider that our principal enemies, being Cilicians, Jews, Syrians and Egyptians,

[1] Dio. Lib. 71.

are an effeminate sort of people, over whom we have been accustomed to triumph. Fear not their numbers, your valour is worth much more than their multitudes. Cassius has more reputation than merit; but if he were a greater general than he is, what could the boldest lion do at the head of a herd of deer? Is it the exploits he performed against the Parthians that they boast so much of? Is it not to your courage that he owes them? Are we not more obliged to other generals for them than to him? I am persuaded that his revolt is the effect of his foolish credulity, and that the report of my death, which was spread all over Syria, has induced him to enter upon this rash enterprise, and consequently, my being now alive and in good health should make him desist from his ill-judged undertaking; but suppose he should not have already given up all hopes of success, it cannot be doubted but our approach will disconcert him, for he is well acquainted with your valour, and cannot but respect my dignity. If I have anything to be apprehensive of, it is that he will probably fall a victim to his despair, and destroy himself rather than support the shame of his defeat, or that some other will kill him to punish his audacity. I desire neither the one nor the other. I should look upon it as a very great misfortune, as I should be thereby deprived of the sweetest fruits of the victory—I

mean the pleasure of pardoning an enemy, and showing my affection for a man who has betrayed me. In short, it would rob me of an opportunity of proving that there yet exists in some men the precious remains of that ancient generosity for which our ancestors were so remarkable."

In the meantime the Senate declared Cassius a public enemy, and confiscated his estate for the benefit of the Emperor; but Marcus Aurelius, who had no sentiments but what were noble and disinterested, having refused it, it was deposited in the public treasury. As to the revolt, it was almost as soon extinguished as begun. Cassius was killed by a centurion, who was jealous to deliver the Emperor from an enemy who was by no means to be despised, and whose violent and untimely death served as an instructive lesson to rebels, to teach them what is generally the consequence of ambition and power unjustly usurped.

Faustina was all this time employed at Rome in taking care of her daughter the Princess Fadilla, who was ill. Marcus Aurelius informed her of Cassius's rebellion, and desired her to meet him, that they might consult together what measures were proper to be taken. Whether she had nothing to say to Cassius's crime, or whether her intention was to cover her perfidiousness by an artificial appearance of indignation against the author of this conspiracy, she answered the Emperor that she would come

to him as soon as possible, but that, in the meantime, she entreated him not to pardon one of the rebels, since the punishment of those miscreants was the greatest mark of kindness he could show their children. "You cannot but know," said she, "that it is very false policy to pardon such guilty people; for if they do not meet with the chastisement they have deserved, they naturally become bolder. I remember that Faustina, my mother, represented to your father, Antoninus, when this very Cassius had attempted his life, that he ought to have a greater regard for his own children than anybody else, and that an Emperor who neglected the safety of his wife and children was destitute of true affection. Our son Commodus," continued she, in her second letter, "is yet very young, and Pompeianus, our son-in-law, is grown old, and they have no support but you. If you suffer Cassius to live, you expose them to his fury and resentment. Take care how you forgive those who have dared to commit so heinous a crime."

Marcus Aurelius, whose heart overflowed with goodness and sweetness of temper, could not prevail upon himself to agree with this opinion; for, no sooner had he heard of the death of Cassius, than he showed public marks of grief and affection. His moderation even went so ar as to make him intercede with the Senate on behalf of the rebels. "I acknowledge your kindness," says he, in

the answer to his wife's letter, "in taking so much care of me and my children. I have read several times the letter you wrote me at Formiae, in which you advise me to punish Cassius's accomplices, but I cannot bring myself to follow your counsel, which is so opposite to my nature. I am, on the contrary, determined to spare the life of his wife, children, and son-in-law; and I will entreat the Senate so to moderate the rigour of the law in their favour that they may neither be condemned to too cruel an exile nor otherwise suffer too severe a punishment. Nothing is so worthy of an Emperor as clemency. It is that virtue that has placed Julius Cæsar among the gods, and has immortalised the memory of Augustus, as well as that of your father, Antoninus, who was honoured with the glorious title of gracious and merciful. If, in this war, my orders had been obeyed, Cassius would yet be alive The gods will grant me their protection in recompense for my moderation. I intend Pompeianus, our son-in-law, to be consul next year."

Nothing more sublime than this can be met with in a heathen. His excessive goodness appeared yet more in the letter he wrote to the Senate entreating them not to shed the blood of any person of quality, and to recall those who were banished or proscribed. "How unfortunate I am," said he, "that it is not in my power to recall

from the grave those who have lost their lives by this rebellion, for I can never approve of an Emperor revenging his own private injuries. Pardon, therefore, I beseech you, Cassius's wife, children, and son-in-law. But why do I intercede for persons who have been guilty of no fault? Let them live, and that without fear or apprehension; for I would have them feel that they live in the world during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Let them quietly enjoy the inheritance of their forefathers, and full liberty of action and going where they think proper, that, wherever they are, they may be living instances of your clemency and mine."

Such were the sentiments of Marcus Aurelius, transmitted to us by his letters, which have been preserved, and which will ever be a monument of the nobleness of soul and generosity of that excellent prince. He gave real and convincing tokens of it to the unfortunate family of Cassius, for he caused their father's property to be restored to his children, and took under his protection Druantianus, his son-in-law, and Alexandria, his daughter, whose grief and affliction for the deplorable end of her father he lessened and mitigated by heaping upon her all manner of benefits.

The Senate could not do otherwise than extol the clemency of the Emperor; Rome echoed again with the

hearty acclamations and unfeigned praises that were so unanimously bestowed upon this best of princes, and Marcus Aurelius, after having regulated and put everything on the best footing in the city, set out for Asia, in order to stifle by his presence all the seeds of war, and entirely reduce to their obedience those towns and provinces that had followed the party of Cassius. Faustina accompanied her husband on this journey; but the fatal period of her debaucheries, together with that of her life, was come. She died in a village at the foot of Mount Taurus[1] which Marcus Aurelius made into a Roman colony, and called it Faustinopolis, after his wife. Some say she was carried off by a sudden death, others that she died of the gout, and there are not wanting those who affirm that she destroyed herself to avoid the shame she must have undergone by her confederacy with Cassius being discovered. Be it as it may, Marcus Aurelius was inconsolable at the death of his wife, and upon this occasion his philosophy abandoned him; for, giving himself up entirely to his affliction, he wept as bitterly as if he had lost the most virtuous wife in the world. He himself pronounced her funeral oration, caused all sorts of honours to be paid her, and requested the Senate to make her a divinity.

[1] Dio. lib. 71. Capitol. in Marc. Antonin.

The Senate, long since accustomed to be very prodigal of honours, and to fill heaven with such goddesses, granted immortality to Faustina, and placed among the divinities her who by her infamous life had been the disgrace of human nature. He further ordered, by a flattering decree that savoured much of impiety, that statues of silver should be erected in the temple of Venus to the honour of Faustina and Marcus Aurelius; that an altar should be raised there, where all the girls of Rome, at their marriage, should be obliged to offer sacrifice, together with their husbands; that a golden statue of Faustina should be erected in the amphitheatre, in the very spot where she had been accustomed to sit at the public shows, and that every time the Emperor took his place there, the principal ladies of Rome should range themselves round the statue of Faustina to do her honour. Marcus Aurelius, for his part, indulged his grief by all the marks that he could possibly give of his love and esteem for his wife. He instituted games which he called Faustinian, and built a most magnificent temple to Faustina, which afterwards was dedicated to Heliogabalus, as if it was its fate to be always consecrated to the most infamous divinities.

When the Emperor had settled everything in the East to his satisfaction, he began his journey towards Rome

He entered the city in triumph, having his son Commodus at his side, whom he created his colleague in the consulship. He entertained the people with the most curious and sumptuous shows, and provided with admirable judgment and foresight against the necessities of the State, causing the laws to be put in force throughout the whole empire. Such transcendent virtues made this prince dear to all the world, and brought into vogue that famous sentence of Plato, that those empires cannot but be happy that are governed by philosophers.

The throne being rendered vacant by the death of Faustina, the Princess Fabia, sister to Verus, had hopes of filling her place. With this view she put in practice all those arts and means that a woman knows how to make use of, when she has a mind to please. The most severe philosophy is not always proof against the darts of love. The most insensible Stoic may be rendered tractable by the charms of a beautiful woman, and a tender, insinuating look frequently alters in a moment the firmest resolutions. Fabia took all the necessary steps[1] to make Marcus Aurelius comprehend her meaning, and armed her looks and glances with such fire as she imagined could not fail to inflame the Emperor's heart,

[1] Capitolin. in Marc. Anton.

but certain domestic reasons outweighed this lady's pretensions. Marcus Aurelius could not make up his mind to give his children a step-mother, nor make a suitable return to her who wished to become so, and who doubtless sighed more ardently for the throne than his affections. The Emperor, therefore, having taken for a concubine the daughter of one of his intendants, applied himself indefatigably to put everything in a good condition. He was thus gloriously employed when he was informed that the barbarians were meditating a new revolt. He resolved to spare them no more, but to humble them so effectually that they should never again be able to create fresh troubles. After having declared war against them with the usual ceremonies,[1] he left Rome accompanied by his son Commodus,[2] whose tender years he intended to train to virtue, and with great rapidity marched against the enemy, over whom he soon after gained a

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[1] There was at Rome, in the Temple of Mars, a pillar, upon which was placed a lance, which was preserved there with great solemnity and superstition. When the Emperor was to declare war against any nation, he went with great ceremony into this temple, and, after having offered sacrifices for the prosperity of his arms, turned the point of this fatal lance towards the people or nation against whom the war was to be carried on, and by this ceremony war was declared.

[2] Dio. lib. 71.

victory, which the barbarians disputed with him from morning till night, only, as it were, to enhance his glory, and manifest his consummate valour and experience. This advantage must have been followed by the entire destruction of these united nations, if death had not stopped him short in the midst of his glorious career, for a few days after this battle he was taken ill. He knew immediately that he was come to the last period of his life, and therefore assembled his friends in his chamber, presented his son to them, entreated them to be a father to him, to instruct him, and to give him their advice. He delivered so moving a speech that they all wept, and, after having given Commodus the wisest and best advice, he died. Nothing could equal the affliction of all classes in the city, of the armies, the provinces and the whole empire. He was universally acknowledged to have been the best prince that ever reigned.

His death gave room for an infinite number of suspicions. Some attributed Marcus Aurelius's sickness to the fatigues of the war. Dion assures us that he knows for certain that the physicians, who were employed by Commodus, hastened his death, at the instigation of that unnatural and wicked prince, who longed to have the reins of the government in his own hands. Others affirm that when the Emperor perceived his son to be of

a depraved and corrupt nature, his life began to be a burden to him, so that he put an end to it by abstaining from nourishment. It is beyond dispute that Marcus Aurelius's greatest trouble and vexation proceeded from Commodus's bad disposition. The latter had already given evident signs of horrible cruelty and all sorts of vices, notwithstanding all the pains his father took to inspire him with noble sentiments,[1] by committing the care of his education to none but such preceptors as were most remarkable for virtue and abilities, but the malignity of his inclinations was more powerful than all the Emperor's endeavours. Whatever occasioned the death of Marcus Aurelius, the whole empire was in the greatest affliction imaginable. The excessive honour that was paid to his memory, the unfeigned tears that were shed at Rome, and the deep mourning that every family put on, were glorious proofs of the high esteem people had for his rare and valuable qualities.

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[1] Dio. lib. 71.

LUCILLA,

WIFE OF LUCIUS VERUS.

Virtue and merit are not hereditary: from a mild and good father often are born children who are wicked and depraved; and the more the good qualities of the parent are remarkable, so much the more does the degeneracy of the son appear in an odious light. Vice is so ingrained in the constitution of some people that nothing can correct or alter it, so that one often sees the best education, example and instruction, thrown away when cast upon an ungrateful soil. Marcus Aurelius, as we have seen, was a most accomplished prince; in him was to be admired a collection of all the virtues, civil, military, and political; but unfortunately his children had nothing of the kind to boast of. His son Commodus was one of the most vicious princes that ever lived—a heap of tyranny, cruelty, and everything that was diabolical. In Lucilla, eldest daughter of Marcus Aurelius, ambition and lasciviousness were predominant qualities: his other children dishonoured their high birth and dignity by the

most infamous actions; and it was observed that even those who died in their childhood had discovered a strong propensity to vice. So true it is,[1] that children bring into the world with them the good or bad seeds which brighten or tarnish their lives, and which are brought to maturity as occasions and opportunities occur.

Lucilla was born at Rome, in the first year of the marriage of Marcus Aurelius with Faustina. Her birth,[2] which filled the town with joy, also furnished the Emperor Antoninus with an opportunity of distributing his bounty to the people, and of honouring his son-in-law with the most important dignities. He gave him the tribunate and pro-consular power, and raised him so high that he left him nothing to wish for but the empire, which he also inherited at the death of the above-mentioned Emperor.

Although Lucius Verus, as well as Marcus Aurelius, was the adopted son of Antoninus, yet the latter did not show him the same tokens of his esteem and affection as the other, for he never set any great value upon him. But Marcus Aurelius was no sooner Emperor than he not only created him Cæsar, with the title of August,

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[1] Lamprid. in Commod.

[2] Tillem. sur M. Aurèle.

but also made him his partner in the sovereign authority, and in order to lay him under a yet more sensible obligation, he betrothed him to his daughter Lucilla, though they were not married till two years later, in the East.

Verus was a handsome man, tall in stature,[1] and his countenance commanded respect. His hair was long and very fair, and he took so much care of it that he used to rub gold dust into it to brighten its colour.[2] He had an impediment in his speech, and was very viciously inclined, much given to gaming, intriguing, and so excessively to wine, that we shall presently see to what a pitch he carried all these irregularities, especially the latter, in which he indulged himself to that degree that he was generally drunk, and his face was covered with pimples.[3]

He was at first very grateful to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius for the extraordinary favours he had received from him, and showed it upon all occasions by the great deference and respect with which he treated him, as if he had been his superior, or father, rather than his colleague

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[1] Capitolin. in Ver.

[2] Dicitur sane tantam habuisse curam flaventium capillorum, ut capiti auri ramenta respergeret, quo magis coma illuminata flavesceret. (Capitolinus).

[3] Spon. recherch. cur. d'Antiq.

and equal. And because Marcus Aurelius's greatest delight consisted in the study of philosophy, Verus, although he had but very little taste or genius for the sciences, by a politic sort of complaisance, also pretended to be a philosopher. But it is the most difficult thing in the world to sustain, for any considerable time, a borrowed character; for, some time or other, the mask will drop off, and show people in their proper colours. Verus was soon weary of counterfeiting, and because Marcus Aurelius's grave and austere manners laid him under an irksome and disagreeable restraint, he longed for a fitting opportunity of quitting Rome, that he might be at liberty to do as he pleased.

The revolt of several barbarous nations happened very opportunely. The Parthians, whom Trajan had subdued, shook off the yoke of obedience, and stirred up all the people of the East. The Chatti, a wild sort of people that dwelt in the district of the modern Hesse-Cassel, dispersed themselves all over Germany, and Britain threatened an insurrection. Aufidius Victorinus was selected in order to humble the former, and Agricola the latter; but it was thought necessary that Verus should go in person against the Parthians, who were the most formidable, and that Marcus Aurelius should stay at Rome, to take care of domestic affairs, and the education of his family.

Lucilla was then in the bloom of youth, being about fourteen years of age, and Marcus Aurelius took great pains to cultivate her mind, in order to make her worthy of the high rank to which she was destined. She was beautiful, and Verus owed her his affection and esteem, both on account of her personal merit and out of gratitude for the obligations he was under to her father. But the disproportion of their age did not at all contribute to the union of their hearts, Lucilla being, as has been observed, extremely young, and Verus thirty-two years old; and accordingly, it will be seen that he never entertained any great passion for her, any more than she did for him.

Marcus Aurelius, being well acquainted with Verus's vicious inclinations, was very glad when he set out for Syria, and was in hopes that if he was once at a distance from the pleasures of Rome, he would not be so much exposed to temptations, and might contract habits of sobriety and temperance by the fatigues of the war and travelling; while Verus, on the contrary, flattered himself that, being at liberty, and having nobody to stand in awe of, he might the more easily gratify his voluptuous passions. He kept himself, however, within bounds at first, but as soon as he came into the country called Apulia, he gave himself up entirely to hunting and

gaming; he went thence to Athens, in a vessel magnificently adorned and loaded with musicians, who made the neighbouring shores echo with soft and effeminate airs; and on his arrival at Antioch, he left the care of the war to his generals, who were officers of experience, and plunged into all sorts of luxury and debauchery, taking no more trouble about the army than if he had come thither only for diversion. By this conduct, so injudicious and so little conformable to his rank, he became the jest and scorn of the Syrians, who despised a prince that made his shameful debaucheries the whole business of his life; but, when they found that he proceeded so far as to make attempts upon the chastity of their wives and daughters, he became the object of their aversion.

Marcus Aurelius heard all this with so much grief that it was one of the things that most exercised his philosophy. In the meantime, in spite of Verus's indolence, the Roman arms were successful. Vologeses, King of the Parthians, was driven out of Armenia. Cassius took Ctesiphon, and destroyed the famous palace of the kings, which passed for a wonderful building; he also besieged Edessa in Mesopotamia; Babylon, Seleucia, and many other strong towns were taken, and all those provinces, which composed the kingdom of the Parthians, were entirely brought under the Roman yoke.

Verus was as much elevated with these successes as if they had been owing to his own military efforts. He ridiculously caused himself to be named Parthicus and Armenicus, and arrogated to himself, with equal pride and injustice, titles that showed the importance of those victories, the glory of which he usurped, though the merit belonged to others. He gave monarchs to such nations as were used to kingly governments, distributed the provinces among the senators of his retinue, and made Avidius Cassius governor of Syria, which was by far the most important post.

This great dignity only served to excite his ambition, and made him long for something higher still. He concealed it, indeed, under a specious show of his great love of liberty, and exclaimed against Emperors at the very time when he was hatching the perfidious design of seizing the sovereign authority. When Verus sent him orders, he received them with contempt, and executed them with negligence; he never ceased to blame the present government, and to sow everywhere the seeds of sedition. Sometimes he spoke of Verus's debaucheries with insolent rashness, and at other times vented his mischievous raillery and scoffing against Marcus Aurelius, whom he called an old good-for-nothing philosopher. Verus, who thought he saw something in

the conduct of Cassius that was very suspicious, was convinced of it when he heard of the liberties he took. He was further informed that Cassius was collecting money by all the means he could think of, which he imagined proceeded from some deep design. He gave Marcus Aurelius notice of all this, and informed him that Cassius, who aimed at nothing less than absolute power, was so much the more to be feared, as he had the secret of insinuating himself into the affections of the legions.

Marcus Aurelius, whose philosophical soul soared far above the ideas of other people, answered his colleague that he had received his letter, in which he perceived uneasiness and ill-grounded suspicions rather than greatness of mind. "If the gods," said he,[1] "have determined to raise Cassius to the throne, all attempts to break through their decree will be labour in vain, for, according to the maxim of your grandfather, no prince ever put his successor to death; but if, on the contrary, Cassius is not authorised by Heaven, he will bring his own destruction upon his head. After all, we must not treat as a criminal a person whom nobody accuses, and to whom no fault is imputed but that of being loved by the

[1] Vulcatius Gallicanus.

soldiers. If we should use a man ill who has always shown a great deal of merit, people would not fail to say that he had rather fallen a victim to our mistrusts and jealousies than that he was chastised for any crime he was guilty of. As for my children (continued he), I should see them perish with great indifference if they deserved less to be beloved than Cassius, and if his life be of more importance to the empire than the offspring of Marcus Aurelius."

These are great sentiments, but it must be confessed they are not altogether as consistent with sound judgment and policy as one could wish. Cassius had in his youth shown evident marks of excessive ambition, so that he was not so little dangerous as to be contemptible. Verus, however, thought he had done all that was incumbent on him to do in acquainting his father-in-law with what was going on; so without giving himself any further trouble, he followed his infamous pleasures as usual. His palace was turned into an abominable seraglio, filled with women of the worst characters, with whom he passed his time in the most dissolute manner; and not satisfied with that, he also kept a number of young boys, whom he brutally abused. He passed the winters at Laodicea,[1]

[1] Capitolin. in Ver.

and the summer at Antioch, leaving everywhere shameful marks of his scandalous debaucheries ; and his time was taken up entirely by day as well as by night in gaming, dancing and gluttony, with the most abandoned wretches, whom he made the confidants of all his secrets, and trusted with the most important affairs.

Verus's unworthy conduct was the greatest affliction imaginable to Marcus Aurelius, and he concluded that the most likely way to put a stop to or, at least, to restrain it in some measure, was to send the Princess Lucilla into the East that she might marry him ; he communicated his design to the Senate, and, after consulting them, declared that he would himself accompany his daughter into Syria. Lucilla was in the prime of life, being about seventeen years of age. She was well enough acquainted with Verus's character, and consequently did not leave her father's palace to be conducted into so remote a country without great regret. Nor can it be wondered at that she was very loth to become the wife of so dissolute and debauched a prince. But Marcus Aurelius was of opinion that this marriage would fix his affections, and that the princess's presence could not but be a curb to his violent and irregular passions. He therefore set out from Rome and arrived at Brundusium, but finding that his enemies had industriously reported that under pretence of going with the princess into Syria, his real

design was to deprive his colleague of the honour of having terminated the war, he resolved to show the innocence and uprightness of his intentions by returning to Rome, leaving his daughter to proceed on her journey under the care of his sister Cornificia, and Pompeianus, uncle to Verus. Upon this occasion he gave a remarkable instance of his humility and dislike to show and splendour, for, being told that the provinces had notice of his journey and were making great preparations to receive him and his daughter with the magnificence that was due to them, he caused letters to be written to the governors and pro-consuls that they should not permit the people to meet the princess, or show her any sort of honour, for he was well aware that these extraordinary expenses had to be defrayed by the provinces, though the pro-consuls would not fail to claim all the merit and receive the reward of them.

In the meantime the news of the Emperor and his daughter being on the road soon spread over Syria. This made Verus extremely uneasy, for he was not at all pleased that his father-in-law should be a witness to his behaviour, and still less did he desire a wife to be a perpetual obstacle to the gratification of his depraved appetites, but, above all he dreaded that Marcus Aurelius would be thoroughly informed of his supine indolence

and indifference to affairs. So he determined to parry the blow by going as far as Ephesus to meet him, under pretence of saving him the trouble of so long and so fatiguing a journey, and there it was that he received the Princess Lucilla, and heard with great joy that Marcus Aurelius had returned to Brundusium. He there married the princess, and conducted her with him into Syria, where she led a very uncomfortable life, for Verus, continuing his debaucheries and despising the young Empress, gave himself up more and more to his shameful and infamous pleasures. Marcus Aurelius was informed of it, and finding that even his daughter's presence was incapable of making any alteration in Verus's conduct, he recalled him on pretence that, the war being finished, it was but just that he should return to reap the fruit of his labours, and receive the honour of a triumph which the Senate had decreed him.

Verus would gladly have been exempt from this honour, for glory was not his predominant passion. A prince that is plunged in debaucheries is very little solicitous about his reputation; but he could not possibly refuse what his father-in-law requested of him, nor show a contempt for the reward with which the Senate had thought proper to recompense his victories (to which, for all that, he knew he had not at all contributed). He

accordingly set out for Rome, and carried his princess with him. Lucilla was as much rejoiced at leaving Syria as her husband was sorry; for as he never looked upon her in any other light than as a spy upon his actions, he had never shown any regard or affection for her. She was in hopes that Verus would be ashamed to take such liberties and indulge himself in such infamous pleasures so much at Rome as he had done in the East. But bad habits are not so easily got over. Verus was the same in all places, or rather worse, if possible, after his return from Syria, for it was his constant practice to drink all night, and towards morning to run about the streets in disguise, committing all those follies that had made Nero the execration of Rome, except his cruelty. He caused an apartment[1] to be fitted up in his palace, which was called the Emperor's tavern, where he used to assemble his companions in debauchery, and which was the scene of his abominations. He never left the table but in order to gratify his more shameful appetites, which he did without respecting the sacred laws of Nature, not even being ashamed of living with his sister Fabia, and Faustina his mother-in-law, in a horrible and incestuous intercourse.

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[1] Capitolin. in Ver.

Lucilla had long been acquainted with his infamous intimacy with Fabia; his excessive complaisance for her, and the absolute power that she had over her brother, sufficiently evinced their criminal intercourse. Lucilla was jealous of it, and continued so till her husband's death. Marcus Aurelius perceived then that by changing climates one does not change one's nature, for in recalling Verus from Syria he but furnished him with fresh objects of debauchery, and so was a melancholy witness to those scandalous irregularities, which before he had only heard of at a distance. Verus now became a heavy burden to the good Emperor, for the infamous life he led, added to his bad treatment of the Princess Lucilla, grieved him beyond measure; and the more so since he kept it to himself, and made no complaints.

To this vexation was added that of the revolt of the Marcomanni, who being determined to shake off the Roman yoke, declared war against the empire. Marcus Aurelius was much alarmed, and assembled the Senate to consult what measures were proper to be taken at this juncture, and after all the necessary preparations had been made it was resolved that the two Emperors should conduct the army in person. This design was the effect of Marcus Aurelius's judicious prudence, for on the one hand he was apprehensive that, if Verus should

remain at Rome, he would do a great deal of mischief by his debaucheries, and on the other hand he was afraid that, if he was sent singly against the barbarians, he would precipitate the empire into some dreadful misfortune, or would abandon the army to pursue his pleasures. They set out, then, together, but with very different sentiments, for Verus was very unwilling to quit Rome, on account of his abominable pleasures; wherefore, they had no sooner passed the Alps than he prevailed upon his father-in-law to return, for the reasons we have already mentioned. As they were upon the road near Altinum, Verus was suddenly attacked with an apoplectic fit. He was immediately taken out of his chariot and bled. They carried him to Altinum, where he lived three days, but in a state of insensibility, and died, little regretted, except by his partners in iniquity.

No innocence can be proof against slander. There were people malicious enough to cast the blame of Verus's death upon Marcus Aurelius, whom they accused of having poisoned his colleague at an entertainment, and of having caused him to be bled at Altinum, when it was bad for his disorder, with a design to hasten his death. Others will needs have it that Faustina committed the crime by giving him poisoned oysters to eat, in revenge for his having indiscreetly communicated their amour to

Lucilla; and lastly, there are not wanting those who impute it to Lucilla herself, and allege that she was moved thereto by her jealousy, on account of his intrigue with Fabia, whom she hated and considered to be the most dangerous of her rivals, being a person who had no sort of regard for her reputation, and who scrupled at nothing that could advance her influence and authority.

It was probable, that Lucilla was easily consoled for the loss of her husband, whose contempt for her, together with his scandalous debaucheries, caused her considerable vexation. Reasons of State and paternal authority had induced her to consent to the match, not any mutual inclination or affection between them; besides, the princess was so young, and Verus had lived so little at Rome, that they had scarcely an opportunity of knowing each other, much less of contracting any intimacy. But the princess did not long enjoy her liberty; no sooner was Verus dead than her father proposed another match for her, which was by no means agreeable to Lucilla; not that she had any sort of dislike to marriage in general (for a father that provides a husband for his daughter is always very favourably listened to), but it was Marcus Aurelius's choice of the person that she could not prevail upon herself to approve of. It was not consistent with the Emperor's way of thinking to proceed in those

matters according to the rules and maxims of policy: he did not require that his son-in-law should have either nobility or riches, but thought it sufficient if he had virtue and moderation, and imagined he had met with one of this character in Pompeianus. He was originally of Antioch, a senator whose reputation recommended him more than his birth, a man of profound wisdom and gravity of disposition. This last merit Lucilla could willingly have dispensed with, nor was she at all backward in giving her father evident proofs of her aversion to this match. The Empress Faustina was[1] also much against it, and offered many reasons to support her opinion. She did not think him in any sort her equal in point of birth and fortune, but that was not the motive of the princess's reluctance; she did not see in Pompeianus that youth and vivacity that were so agreeable to her; she could have tolerated a considerable abatement of his excessive wisdom and virtue, provided he had been younger and of a more gallant disposition. The fact of Verus's having been too great a lover of pleasure was no reason why she should desire a husband who was too old to have any relish for it, and such a one she took Pompeianus to be, who, being in the decline of

[1] Capitolin. in Marc. Anton.

life, always wore a composed and serious countenance suitable to the austerity of his profession. The resistance of the Empresses was not, however, strong enough to make the Emperor alter his resolution: he insisted absolutely upon this match, and Lucilla was obliged to undergo all the uneasiness and vexation that is naturally the consequence of a forced obedience. Pompeianus became the Princess Lucilla's husband. He had a son whom he named after himself, and, as Dion informs us, a daughter called Lucilla.

This illustrious alliance procured him the respect of all Rome, which before had the highest opinion of his merits; and though he could not boast of that high dignity that Verus possessed, yet he was very much esteemed, and the honour that was due to him as son-in-law to the Emperor was paid him by everybody. The princess his wife lost nothing of the privileges and precedence that she had always enjoyed as Empress. She still maintained in the amphitheatre and all public assemblies the rank that she held in Verus's time, for that prince's death[1] did not deprive her of any of those advantages. She was still distinguished by all those pompous ornaments that accompanied her dignity, and it would have been well

[1] Herodian. lib. 1.

if she had also observed the decency that became it ; but though she was very tenacious of her own rights and prerogatives, she forgot that there was a duty due from her to her husband. As she had only married Pompeianus in compliance with her father's will, she did not think it incumbent on her to be faithful to a husband to whom she had never given her heart, so she dishonoured her marriage by shameful prostitutions. Unhappy fate of ill-matched nuptials! Where an absolute authority, which cannot unite hearts and affections, obliges a very young woman to accept a man advanced in years, she is sure to take vengeance upon the husband, whom she betrays, for the forced submission she is compelled to yield by a tyrannical parent, who insists upon being obeyed.

Lucilla, being of a sprightly disposition, and then about twenty-four years of age, could not reconcile herself to the grave and serious behaviour of Pompeianus, and therefore endeavoured to find elsewhere that life and vivacity that was so suitable to her own humour.[1] Quadratus (of a very noble family in Rome) was the person in whom she met with all she desired. He was a charming youth, full of fire, spirit and gallantry, and very rich,

[1] Herodian. lib. 1.

which not a little contributed to the gratification of his amorous inclinations. Quadratus soon perceived that he was not indifferent to Lucilla, with whom he became passionately in love, and by the assiduous court he paid the princess, gave occasion for such discourse and censure as was not at all favourable to her; but soon after, the intrigue was carried on with so little air of mystery that it was no secret at all. This crime was an introduction to more scandalous proceedings; for, finding in Commodus, her brother, a heart as corrupt as her own, she made no scruple about[1] living with him in shocking and unnatural intimacy. By these incestuous favours she preserved that pre-eminence of rank which her brother allowed her after the death of Marcus Aurelius, and it was at the expense of her honour that she purchased those vain distinctions which she regarded with so much pride and affection. But as of all honours none are so precarious as those which are procured by guilt, so Lucilla soon had the mortification of being forced to yield to another the rank she had held with so much pomp and ceremony.

Crispina, Commodus's wife, not being able to endure that Lucilla should claim a right to that precedence

[1] Dio. in Com. lib. 72.

which she claimed to be due to herself, resolved to assume, upon all occasions, the rank which belonged to her as Empress. This divided the Court into parties, but Commodus had no sooner declared his opinion than it was followed and agreed to by everyone according to custom; so the homage that was used to be paid to Lucilla was now given to Crispina, and Lucilla herself was obliged in decency to pay her court to her sister-in-law, notwithstanding her pride. It is a very difficult task for those haughty spirits who have been accustomed to see all the world acknowledge their superiority to be forced to give up their heart's desire and follow those with respect and submission whom they used to precede. It is not without great regret and vexation that they are compelled to bend beneath the insupportable yoke of dependence; for people never submit with a good grace when they do so by compulsion. Lucilla could not, without the utmost rage and jealousy, bear to see Crispina fill up the place which was hers before, and assume that superiority over her which she herself had made the reigning Empress feel before her elevation. She looked upon herself as quite eclipsed by Crispina, considered that she was despised when her sister-in-law was respected, and that the claims of Commodus's wife were an attack upon those of Verus's widow. This occasione

an implacable hatred and jealousy between the two princesses; and Lucilla, who was not a person to keep it shut up in her breast, resolved that the Emperor, who permitted this distinction so much to her prejudice, should be the object of her indignation. She therefore determined to dethrone him and place some other in his stead, who, by sharing the empire with her, might reinstate her in her former glory and splendour. She was the more exasperated against her brother because, in order to gain his support in her interests, she had not scrupled to prostitute herself to him by a shameful and detestable incest, which was known to all the world. At first she thought of many things which opposed this dangerous resolution, but her passion soon removed all the obstacles that her reason suggested, so after having hardened her conscience, she thought of nothing but how to execute her intention, and find out a proper person to be her accomplice in the crime. Pompeianus, her husband, did not seem fit to conduct such an affair, nor dared she run the risk of trusting him with a secret of that nature; besides, he had a friendship for Commodus, and was not, in her opinion, capable of entering into so black a plot. Quadratus was therefore the man she selected to be the instrument of her revenge, and the executor of her scheme.

Lucilla took a favourable opportunity to communicate the matter to him and prepare his mind for it. There are certain moments when complaisant lovers can refuse nothing to the objects of their passion, and a skilful, cunning woman knows how to make the most of them. The princess, knowing how much she was adored by her gallant, communicated her affliction to him, and at the same time put on the most melancholy aspect to make him the more sensible of her grief. She complained bitterly of the affront she had received from Crispina,[1] who, by robbing her of the honours that nobody had ever disputed with her before, degraded her from the rank that was her right as daughter of one Emperor and widow of another; and because everything that a fine woman and a mistress asserts, when she is in affliction, proceeds from her mouth with such an insinuating and irresistible air as goes to the bottom of the heart, Lucilla found no great difficulty in prevailing upon Quadratus to agree to whatever she had a mind to. They therefore resolved to murder Commodus, who had preferred his wife's interests to those of his sister. But as the undertaking was dangerous, Quadratus thought it expedient and safest to obtain the assistance of others. The secret,

[1] Herodian. lib. 1, c. 19.

then, was communicated to Quintianus, a bold, enterprising young man, and many other persons of distinction. Quintianus undertook to deal the mortal blow, and Quadratus, who was rich, was to be very liberal of his money and scatter it plentifully among the people, who they supposed would be so taken up with gathering it as not to think of revenging a murder that procured them so great an advantage.[1]

Quintianus, though courageous enough, was not sufficiently discreet, for, as the Emperor was to go through a dark passage in his way to the amphitheatre, in which the assassin stood ready to perform his bloody work, Quintianus contented himself with only showing him the poniard and saying in a menacing tone, "See here what the Senate sends thee!"[2] This imprudence[3] and blustering threat only served to reveal the conspiracy, and to bring upon Quintianus the punishment he justly deserved for his treason and stupidity. The Emperor's guards fell upon him immediately, and dispatched him in a moment.

Lucilla was all this time in apprehension about the success of this perilous attempt, and was ready to die

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[1] Herodian. lib. 1.

[2] Hunc tibi pugionem Senatus mittit.

[3] Lamprid. in Com. Herodian. lib. 1. Dio. lib. 72.

with fear when she was told that the Emperor had escaped unhurt. Commodus caused the affair to be thoroughly sifted, which resulted in a number of executions. Quadratus was one of the first that was sacrificed to the Emperor's fury, because he was found to be most guilty, and Lucilla was condemned to a rigorous banishment in the island of Capreæ, a punishment in no sort proportionate to the enormity of her crimes; nor did she come off so cheaply, for Commodus, who was resolved to give full scope to his revenge, ordered her to be put to death, and to say the truth she had merited no less. This haughty and lascivious princess thus brought her destruction upon her own head, and, in order to gratify her unlimited pride and procure herself those vain and empty honours she was so fond of, came to a tragical and untimely end.

CRISPINA,

WIFE OF COMMODUS,

AND

MARCIA,

CONCUBINE OF COMMODUS.

It is very difficult to correct the defects and imperfections that are innate in our constitutions, and become part of our very being; nor does it often happen that the most careful education and most powerful examples of virtue operate so strongly as to alter our nature. That which is born with us may be modified, but seldom conquered; for generally it happens that whatever seeds Nature has sown in our minds, such will be the fruit they produce.

Nobody could have taken more pains to instruct a son and instil into him noble and virtuous sentiments than did Marcus Aurelius. His whole conversation tended to inspire Commodus with mildness, humanity, and all those good qualities which he himself possessed in so eminent a degree. In addition, he gave him the most skilful masters, whom he chose from all who were

remarkable for learning, probity, and good morals in the whole empire. All these precautions, cares, and precepts were however in vain; for the depraved nature of Commodus was such that no instruction could work upon it, nor was it in the power of anything to reform his vicious inclinations. The malignity of his heart showed itself from his very cradle, and he was but twelve years old when he gave an instance of such barbarity as one would not imagine so tender an age to be capable of. Being at Centumcellae (now called Civita Vecchia), and having a mind to take a bath, he caused the person who had the care of the bath to be thrown into a furnace, because the water was rather too warm. He was prodigiously passionate, impetuous and violent; all which appeared in every feature of his face. He had fiery eyes[1] and a wild and furious look, casting here and there such horrible glances as seemed to threaten with sudden destruction those to whom they were directed. He was not ill made in his person; his shape was well proportioned, he had a manly countenance, a good complexion, fair curly hair; but notwithstanding all this, he had the manner of a wicked, corrupt man: his conversation was

[1] Lamprid. in Comm. Spon, recherches. curieuses d'Antiq. Herodian.

filthy and obscene, without restraint or coherence, like that of a drunken man: his manners were low, base, contemptible, altogether unworthy of a man of his birth and rank; he employed his time in nothing but jumping, whistling, and acting more like a buffoon than an Emperor; profaning his palace with horrible debaucheries, and turning his apartment into a scene of prostitution and infamy, where, with his execrable companions of the same stamp, he plunged himself into the most shameful excesses of drunkenness and impurity, too prodigal to care what expense he incurred, and too corrupt to have the least regard to decency. This was the melancholy prelude to the abominable life of Commodus, son of the wisest and best of all the Roman Emperors.

The sort of people he was surrounded with continually encouraged him in his vicious practices, nor could he endure any about him but such as flattered his passions. Marcus Aurelius, having once a mind to banish from the palace certain officers who had employments in the young prince's household, and who, instead of instilling into him notions of virtue and honour, gave him very pernicious lessons, Commodus was so afflicted at it that he fell sick, and the Emperor carried his complaisance and indulgence so far as to recall those unworthy and perfidious wretches, who did not fail to perfect the work they had begun.

Marcus Aurelius was thoroughly informed of all these irregularities, and therefore resolved to carry the prince with him into Scythia, where the rebellious Marcomanni had recommenced hostilities; and in order to curb the impetuosity of his passions, he thought it best to marry him betimes, sooner, indeed, than he would have done if the movements of the barbarians had not laid him under the necessity of settling the matter as soon as he could, that he might be at leisure to make preparations for the war, or if the prince had been more discreet; so the marriage was celebrated with considerable precipitation. The Emperor, knowing that his presence was absolutely necessary in Scythia, did not take much time to hesitate about the choice of the lady, but immediately selected Crispina. She was one of the handsomest women in Rome,[1] daughter of the senator Bruttius Præsens, whose merits had been several times rewarded with the consulship; but she did not possess her father's good qualities. She was of an amorous disposition, and so susceptible to love that, whatever gravity and reserve the high rank she was now raised to required of her, her temperament got the better of her reason; she dishonoured her dignity by the

[1] Trist. Com. Hist.

most scandalous libertinism, which was the cause of her ruin, and of the untimely death with which Commodus afterwards punished her infamous behaviour. It is very likely that when the Emperor married her to Commodus she was innocent, or at least had been circumspect enough to conceal her gallantries. But we shall see that her becoming a wife, far from fixing her inclinations, only served to furnish her with opportunities of gratifying her unfortunate appetites.

After the celebration of these nuptials, the Emperor and his son set out for Scythia. Some historians say that the new Empress accompanied them; be it as it may, Marcus Aurelius, who had resolved to extirpate those barbarous people, was seized in the midst of his victories with a disorder that soon laid him in his grave; and it was with a great deal of reason generally believed that his perfidious son was the author of it, and that the physicians, who had the care of him, purchased the favour of Commodus at the expense of his father's life.

In the meantime, the Princess Lucilla enjoyed at Rome all those honours that had always been paid to the Empresses, and although her second husband[1] was a person of inferior dignity to Verus her first, the Emperor

[1] Herodian. lib. 1. c. 20.

her father deprived her of none of those rights and prerogatives which were due to the Emperors' wives, and she took care to assume, with great pride and haughtiness, the most pompous distinctions. Crispina looked upon the pretensions of Lucilla as an attack upon her own privileges; she imagined that the precedence belonged rather to the reigning Empress than to the widow of an Emperor, and especially since she was married again to a private senator; so, as she was no less vain than her sister-in-law, she everywhere took her place, and insisted upon it as her indisputable right. Lucilla was so enraged at this that she was resolved to have Commodus, her brother, assassinated, and to raise in his stead some other person to the throne, who, being under obligation to her for it, would re-establish her in all the splendour of that rank she had hitherto enjoyed, and which was now taken from her. We have already seen what was the issue of this conspiracy; it merely served to furnish Commodus with a fair pretence of exercising his cruelty, for the assassin, who had undertaken to give Commodus the fatal blow, only threatened him and showed him a dagger, telling him that it was a present the Senate made him. The Emperor ordered him to be seized, and he suffered that death which he so well deserved.

Commodus could never forget the words of Quintianus, who intended to have murdered him. They made so

deep an impression in his mind,[1] that he ever after looked upon the Senate as a body of men composed of his greatest enemies, whom he ought to get rid of by all means. This was the beginning of that implacable hatred he conceived against them, and which caused the shedding of blood and tears in abundance in Rome. He put to death the most illustrious of the senators, especially all those who had been friends of Marcus Aurelius. Paternus, colonel of his guards, whom he accused of having a design against his life; the brothers Condianus, who had served with great distinction in all his father's wars, were some of the first sacrificed to his rage. Salvius Julianus, who commanded one of his armies, also fell a victim to his jealousy.

If he was dreaded on account of his cruelty, he was not less detested for his incontinency, which he carried to such a pitch as to debauch all his sisters, and to have criminal commerce with his other nearest relations.[2] It was his custom to expose his concubines in his presence to the brutal lust of all who desired them, and one of his mistresses whom he loved most he called his wife,

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[1] Herodian. lib. 1. c. 22,

[2] Lamprid. in Com.

though she least of all deserved his affection, on account of her numerous amours and intrigues.

There was no sort of abomination that he did not indulge himself in to that degree that nothing had ever been seen like it.

Crispina was a witness of all these horrible proceedings, but she would have been in the wrong to complain, since the life she herself led was not much better. This Empress, being hurried on by her strong passions and the impetuosity of her temperament was not intimidated by the bloody executions her husband ordered every day, but being encouraged by his example, greedily sought after opportunities of gratifying her inordinate appetites, and lived in a most infamous and scandalous manner. She was, by her prostitutions, thoroughly avenged for his contempt of her, and whilst he was dishonouring the empire by his excesses and debaucheries, she was disgracing both him and the throne by her shameful and impudent conduct. But as these reprisals are often attended with bad consequences, so a woman ought not to expect to go on unpunished with such a husband as Commodus. Crispina soon found the truth of this by sad experience, for happening to be once surprised with one of her gallants, Commodus was so sensible of the dishonour and affront, that he banished her to the island of Capreæ.

The Empress Lucilla had also been exiled to the same place, so that the two princesses, who had been so hotly engaged in disputes about rank and precedence, met there. Some say that common misfortune united them in a strict friendship. It is, however, certain, that they were both put to death in that island, for Commodus, who had always in his mind Quintianus's attempt upon his life, and knew that his sister was the cause of it, never could forgive those two unfortunate princesses the crimes they had been guilty of.[1]

This execution was followed by a great many others. Rufus and Capito (persons who had been consuls), Vitrasia Faustina, his own near relation, Crassus, pro-consul of Asia, and a large number of great men, illustrious by their nobility and merit, lost their lives by order of this tyrant; and if Sextus, son of Maximus, so remarkable for the vivacity of his wit and learning, escaped his fury, it was owing to an artifice he made use of to deceive those who were to have sacrificed him to the Emperor's barbarity.[2]

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[1] Dio. lib. 72.

[2] Sextus, who was in Syria, being informed that his father had been put to death, and not doubting he would be served the same way, had recourse to a stratagem to avoid falling into the hands of the instruments of Commodus's cruelty, who filled all Syria with their murders. He

Perennis, chief favourite of Commodus, persuaded him to these cruelties, for, having acquired an absolute power over the Emperor, he could influence him as he pleased; so, whoever he had a grudge against, he had nothing to

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drank a great quantity of blood, and then, mounting on horseback, spurred the animal on purpose to make him rear; then, contriving to fall gently, he pretended that the horse had thrown him, and caused himself to be carried into the house by his servants, where he made as if he were almost dead, vomiting the blood he had swallowed as if it had been occasioned by his fall. The report of this accident was soon spread abroad, and came to the ears of the Emperor's agents, who were even told that he was dead. They had no room to doubt it when Sextus carried the trick so far as to cause a ram to be put into a coffin and to be burnt, with all the usual ceremonies, as if it were his body. In the meantime he began to grow very weary of being shut up in his house, so ventured out of his prison, wandering from one town to another in disguise, and altering his voice for fear of being discovered. He was known, however, notwithstanding all these precautions, and orders were given from Court to arrest him. Several persons were executed merely for happening to be like him, and their heads sent to Rome. Others, who were accused of having protected this condemned person, had their estates confiscated, and many of them were put to death, though they had never known or seen him, so that nobody was certain whether the real Sextus was dead or alive. After the death of Commodus, there started up a person who called himself Sextus, the son of Maximus, who demanded his father's dignities and inheritance. He was interrogated, and answered every question correctly, even about family affairs, which it was next to impossible for a stranger to be acquainted with. Pertinax, who knew that the true Sextus understood Greek very well, which he had learnt in Syria, spoke to him in that language, but the impostor, not being able to comprehend what the Emperor said, was banished from Rome in disgrace.

do but to invent some lie to make Commodus jealous of him. By this method he easily got rid of all those who he thought might be in any way prejudicial to his interests. This infamous wretch directed all the affairs of the empire as he thought proper, and applied to his own use the forfeited estates of all those whom he had caused to perish by his diabolical slanders, thus heaping up immense riches with a design to distribute them among the soldiers as soon as a fair opportunity should offer of raising himself to the throne. He caused the most important military employments to be given to his son, and attributed to his valour and capacity whatever exploits were performed, or victories obtained, by the courage and experience of the generals, and at last carried his impudence and boldness to such a pitch as to dismiss from their employments the bravest officers belonging to the army in Britain, that he might fill up their posts with such people as he could depend upon.

All these things (together with the information the Emperor received from several parts, to the effect that Perennis aspired to the throne) at last roused Commodus from his lethargy, but what put the finishing stroke to the ruin of this insolent minister was the arrival of fifteen hundred soldiers from the Roman army in Britain, who said they came to defend the Emperor against the

treasonable designs of his false favourite, who was secretly endeavouring to raise his son to the throne. Cleander, for whom the Emperor had a very great regard, was the author of this report; he knew so well how to irritate Commodus against Perennis that the iniquitous favourite was immediately massacred by order of the Emperor, who was no sooner delivered from his most shameful dependence upon Perennis, than he became equally the slave of Cleander.

This man, who had been the sport of Fortune, was a native of Phrygia, and was taken to Rome amongst other vile and common slaves. After various adventures[1] he found out the secret of insinuating himself into the Emperor's family, where he managed so well by his arts and intrigues, that he became chief of those whose office it was to sleep in the Emperor's chamber, then colonel of the Prætorian Guards, and at last so powerful and so high in favour with Commodus, that he married him to Damostratia, one of his concubines, and vested him with absolute authority.

It happened to Cleander just as it frequently happens to those whom Fortune raises from a state of obscurity. He became insolent, proud, ungrateful, and made no

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[1] Dio. lib. 72. Herodian. lib. 1.

other use of his excessive power than to pave himself a way to a greater. Master as he was of all the fortunes of the Romans, he made and unmade consuls at his pleasure, having created no less than five-and-twenty in one year, which had never been done till then, and which no Emperor ever ventured to do since. (Severus, who afterwards sat upon the throne, was one of these consuls). He sold all employments, civil and military, and raised to the rank of senators the most abject of mankind, provided they had but money enough to purchase it; and in order to stop the mouths of those whose zeal for the Emperor's service might have induced them to find fault with him, he caused Burrus,[1] the Emperor's brother-in-law, to be put to death, accusing him of aspiring to the throne, at the very time when he himself was taking all the measures he could think of to procure that supreme dignity.

Thus did Commodus betray himself by his indolence, and by suffering his favourites to exercise unlimited power; whilst he himself, entirely taken up with his irregular passions, thought of nothing but how to gratify them. He passed whole days in fighting and killing wild beasts in the amphitheatre; and as if this butchery made

[1] Lamprid.

him as celebrated as the greatest military exploits would have done, he caused himself to be named the Roman Hercules, carried a club and wore a lion's skin. He converted his palace into an infamous seraglio, where he maintained three hundred women and as many boys, who were the miserable victims of his monstrous lasciviousness. He was so foolish as to give his name to the city of Rome, calling it the colony of Commodus, and Marcia was accused of having persuaded him to this ridiculous piece of extravagance, for, of all his concubines, none had so much power over him as she.

Marcia was extremely beautiful, very witty and cunning, capable of the greatest cabinet intrigues. She had the secret of insinuating herself into the good graces of Commodus, by her complaisance and all those artful caresses that women of her character are well acquainted with, and practise with great success where they have a mind to please ; so that if she was not declared Empress, she may be said to have had at least the same honours and authority as if she had been. She had[1] a great esteem for the Christians, though she could not prevail upon herself to imitate the sanctity of their lives, but espoused their

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[1] Herodian. lib. 72. Xhipil. in Com.

interests upon all occasions, and procured them[1] many favours; whence it resulted that the Church enjoyed peace and tranquility during Commodus's reign, though at the same time nothing was to be seen at Rome and in the provinces but slaughter and blood, the terrible effects of his cruelty. This favourite mistress had such influence over the Emperor that he could refuse her nothing.

He was not ashamed to carry his complaisance so far as to change his name, and cause himself to be called Amazonian, to do honour to the picture of Marcia, where she was represented in an Amazonian dress, which this artful woman affected to wear, as most becoming to her. But the greatest instance of this Emperor's weakness, and of his being bewitched with the charms of Marcia, was his going publicly to the amphitheatre in the habit of an Amazon, in order to show his mistress how much[2] he was delighted when she obliged him so far as to appear in that graceful equipment. This base and unworthy behaviour furnished ample matter for laughter and ridicule to the Romans, when they beheld their Emperor in the circus, dressed like a woman, and degrading his

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[1] Baron. ad. an. 182.

[2] Lamprid.

dignity by such a scandalous and shameful metamorphosis: but what will not inordinate passions bring people to!

Thus Commodus abandoned the affairs of the empire, and troubled himself with nothing but his fooleries, whilst Cleander, insolently abusing the blind confidence which the Emperor placed in him, was labouring to establish his own authority, by using all the means he could think of to make himself popular, without reflecting that the method he took was only hastening his own ruin. In fact, when the city was afflicted by the plague to such a degree that two thousand people perished daily, and at the same time by a dreadful famine, Cleander heaped up vast stores of corn, intending to distribute it among the people, and so purchase their favour and protection by this politic and self-interested bounty; but Papirius, superintendent of corn supplies, having seen through Cleander's intention, made him the dupe of his own artifices; for his having collected such stores of corn made it so dear, that the effects of the famine began to be worse than the plague. Papirius, who hated Cleander, seeing the people ready to mutiny, accused the favourite of being the occasion of this scarcity, and of having ambitious designs. The people were the more exasperated against him because, just at that time, a woman, followed by a great number of children, made

great lamentation, and cried out bitterly against Cleander. These seditious exclamations so animated the people against him, and so convinced them of his being the author of all their sufferings, that in a tumultuous manner they went directly to Commodus, who was without the city pursuing his diversions, and demanded that he should surrender Cleander to them. Cleander having heard of this, sent immediately a detachment of the Guards against the mutineers, and killed a great many of them. Those who could escape ran into the city, carrying the alarm and confusion along with them ; the people took up arms, and Rome became the theatre of the most terrible Civil War.

Commodus, in the meantime, being plunged in his sensual and infamous pleasures, knew nothing of this sedition, nor did anybody care to inform him of it, for fear of incurring the indignation of Cleander, who made the Emperor do just what he pleased ; but the Princess Fadilla, whose birth and rank put her above any fears of that nature, went to her brother, and throwing herself at his feet all in tears, represented to him the melancholy condition of Rome, and the imminent danger he himself was exposed to from the fury of the people, who were become ripe for any mischief, owing to the insolence and tyranny of Cleander ; at the same time she revealed to

him the perfidious and ambitious designs of that haughty courtier, who aimed at nothing less than the throne. This information was too interesting not to make a great impression upon Commodus; but what decided him to sacrifice Cleander to the clamours of the people was the complaints of his dear Marcia, who, pretending great fear and apprehension for the Emperor's life,[1] represented the danger as much greater than it really was, and said everything that could possibly exasperate him against Cleander; and as nothing is more fitted to persuade than the insinuations of a darling mistress, Commodus condemned to death the unfortunate favourite, whose fall also involved that of many others, for it then became criminal to have had any friendship or intimacy with him.

Cleander's ambitious views greatly increased the mistrust of the Senate the Emperor had entertained ever since the conspiracy of Lucilla; for, imagining that he ought not for the future to put confidence in anybody, he involved in his suspicions and resentment people of the highest rank and quality, and nothing but their destruction could satisfy him. Papirius, who had contributed to the ruin of Cleander; Julianus, Governor of Rome, whom the Emperor used to call father; Julius Alexander, a brave

[1] Dio. lib. 72.

and experienced general; Mamertinus and Sura, and a large number of great men were the victims of his fury.

These bloody executions did not in the least interrupt his follies and debaucheries. He was every day in the amphitheatre amongst the gladiators, showing his skill in killing wild beasts, and boasting of his famous exploits. Sometimes he appeared in a very odd and curious dress, with a lion's skin thrown over his purple robe spotted with gold, holding a club in his hand, in imitation of Hercules, whose name he had taken; and at other times he would dress himself in women's clothes, in the sight of all the people, and drink to them, that he might have the pleasure of hearing them cry out, "Long live the Emperor." He would then go down into that part of the amphitheatre where the combats took place, and fight with the gladiators, slaughtering, without mercy, those who contended with him, though those poor unfortunate creatures were forced to spare him out of respect, not daring to exert themselves. The Senate authorised by their base acclamations this shameful and cruel behaviour; for when it happened that he killed a bear or lion, or any other animal, they would join their flattering applause to that of the people, and servilely cry out, "Thou overcomest the world.[1] Thou art the conqueror, O brave Amazonian!"

[1] Dio. lib. 72. Xiphilin. in Com.

In short, after having disgraced the empire by innumerable crimes, which it would be tedious to particularise, he took it in his head to substitute himself in the place of the consuls whom he resolved to put to death,[1] and to appear upon the theatre as consul and servant of the gladiators; for, among a vast number of ridiculous titles that he assumed, that which he took most pleasure in was that of first champion among the followers of the gladiators, who with his own hand had killed about twelve hundred men. The first day of January, which among the Romans was one of the most solemn in the whole year, was the time he made choice of to entertain the public with this fantastic scene, and communicated his design some time before to his beloved Marcia.

Marcia, who foresaw the consequences of this monstrous project, opposed it as much as possible, and represented to him the infinite shame and scandal that it would bring upon him and the Roman people; that his own reputation and interest absolutely required that he should not be so infatuated with gladiators, especially since he never went among them without endangering his life, and putting himself in the power of wretches who were destitute of all sentiments of honour or principle. She endeavoured

[1] Herodian, lib. 1.

to corroborate her arguments by a thousand caresses, embracing his knees, and shedding a torrent of tears, but nothing was capable of making him alter his resolution.

Lætus and Eclectus, captains of his guard, also took the liberty to expostulate with him upon that subject, but with no better success; in vain did they represent to him the disgrace that this monstrous novelty would bring upon the empire. Commodus, who was not to be influenced by reason or sense, commanded them to arrange and prepare everything for the ceremony; and looking upon those zealous officers as rash and presumptuous censurers of his conduct, turned away from them abruptly with indignation in his countenance. In fact, he was so provoked that they should have the impudence and assurance to make these remonstrances that he determined to put them to death next day, and entering his closet, drew up a list of those who were to be executed, which he concealed at the head of his bed. Lætus and Eclectus were not the only condemned persons, for Marcia, who had endeavoured to divert him from his purpose, was also of the number; and the most illustrious among the senators were destined to the same fate, the tyrant intending to enrich his gladiators with their spoils. But matters happened quite contrary to his expectations, for Commodus fell himself a victim to his own cruelty. His design was

discovered, and he was put to death by the hands of those very people whose blood was to have been spilled the next morning.

It was a custom among the Romans of quality and distinction to keep beautiful children to amuse them with their agreeable prattle. They went about almost naked, having scarcely anything on them but diamonds and jewels. The Emperor had one of these boys, whom he was so fond of as to let him frequently sleep with him, and called him Philo-Commodus, or the favourite of Commodus. This little boy was so indulged as to be at liberty to do whatever he pleased, so that the officers and guards never hindered him from going in and out of the Emperor's chamber as often as he had a mind. This child was accidentally the occasion of Commodus's infernal designs being discovered, for, as he came out of the Emperor's room with the fatal paper in his hand, Marcia was apprehensive that it might be of consequence, and took it from him. Her curiosity prompted her to read it, and it may be easily conceived that she was extremely surprised and terrified at discovering the Emperor's barbarous intention. "And is it thus," said she, "thou inhuman monster, that thou intendest to recompense the love and attachment I have always had for thee? Have I for so many years past suffered thy

insolence and brutal temper to be rewarded at last with a cruel and unjust death? But no, it shall never be said that a barbarous and bloody tyrant could thus treat a woman who has not deserved such usage at his hands."

It was idle to waste time in reflection, for every moment was precious, and Marcia did not throw them away in useless meditations. She immediately sent for Eclectus, with whom history tells us she had an intimacy that was not very consistent with virtue, and showing him the paper, "See here," said she, "the handsome treatment that is preparing for us to-morrow." Eclectus, as soon as he was informed of the Emperor's intentions and of the danger he was in, trembling with fear, sent the paper, well sealed up, by a person he could trust, to Lætus. Lætus, not less surprised and alarmed than the other two, went directly to them to consult what was to be done. It was soon determined in this secret council that Commodus should be poisoned, and that without loss of time. This seemed the more practicable plan, as Marcia had been used to give him what he drank. The plot succeeded. Commodus, returning much heated and thirsty from the bath, called for something to drink, and Marcia presented him a cup of excellent wine, but of so dangerous a composition, that as soon as he had taken it he felt a great heaviness in his head (Dion will have it

that they poisoned the meat that was served up to him at supper). Marcia and Eclectus caused everybody to withdraw from the Emperor's room, on pretence of keeping him quiet that he might sleep ; but when the conspirators saw that he vomited with great violence, they were terribly afraid,[1] lest he should get rid of the poison by that means, and the whole affair be discovered. They were the more apprehensive of this, as the Emperor seemed to suspect something by certain threats that he uttered. They therefore thought it the surest way to induce Narcissus, a famous wrestler, remarkable for his great strength, to smother him in his bed, and promised him great rewards. He undertook the business, and strangled the Emperor, after which they conveyed the body out of the chamber and covered it with a carpet.

Marcia and her accomplices were in dreadful apprehension of what was to happen as soon as it should be known that the Emperor was dead. They thought it absolutely necessary that some senator of merit should be proclaimed Emperor, who would be agreeable to all the orders of the city, and able to protect them against the fury of the soldiers, who they knew would be enraged in the highest degree at the death of a

[1] Dio. lib. 72.

prince who allowed them great liberties. Pertinax was thought a proper person to fill the throne. They, therefore, declared him Emperor without further delay, and gave out that Commodus had died of apoplexy. We shall presently mention the circumstances of Pertinax's election, so at present shall only add that the new Emperor harangued the soldiers, and did not forget to speak very honourably of Lætus, who had given him the empire.

The consul Falco could not hear Lætus praised without expressing great indignation, and as he was not a man to dissemble his real sentiments, neither from complaisance nor policy, he declared openly to Pertinax that no good was to be expected from him, since he was capable of tarnishing the beginning of his reign by shamefully commending a man who had dipped his hands in the blood of his Emperor, and showing marks of his esteem for Marcia and Eclectus, who had been the instruments of Commodus's cruelty. Pertinax answered with great moderation. He told Falco that a young man as he was did not consider what it was to be under a necessity of obeying; that Marcia and Lætus had acted by compulsion, and that as to their having put the Emperor to death for his tyranny, it sufficiently showed that they did not approve of it.

Pertinax was too sensible of the obligations he was under to Marcia not to take her part; in fact, she received from the new Emperor great tokens of his gratitude during the three months that he reigned, but she did not escape punishment.

Julianus revenged the death of Commodus; for this Emperor, to whose elevation Lætus had much contributed, imagining that he, together with Marcia, afterwards favoured the party of Severus, put them both to death, and caused Narcissus, who had strangled Commodus, to be exposed to the wild beasts.

TITIANA,

WIFE OF PERTINAX.

It looked as if Pertinax had only escaped the tyranny of Commodus to fall a sacrifice to Fortune, and that he had only made his life famous by the most glorious exploits to lose it miserably upon the throne. Happy is the private individual, and wretched the Sovereign! He soon found, by experience, that the most exalted stations are often dreadful precipices. He was born at a village in Liguria, the son of Helvius Successus, a seller of firewood, who, having made a little money by his occupation, was resolved to bring up his son to learning, and educate him as well as his moderate circumstances would admit of.[1] It was not long before Pertinax gave tokens of a superior genius, and of being destined for greater things; for he learned and practised so well the art of war upon every occasion on which he was employed that he was looked upon as a person of consummate experience, capable

[1] Capitolin. in Pertin.

of filling the highest posts. In fact, it was he who, by his extraordinary prudence and resolution, appeased the legions that had revolted in Britain;[1] and it may be affirmed that he saved the island for Marcus Aurelius, who knew so well the importance of this service and the merit of Pertinax that he several times extolled him in full Senate: glorious commendation, when given by a prince as much an enemy to flattery and dissimulaton as Marcus Aurelius was. But it was not only by empty praises that this magnificent and generous Emperor rewarded the glorious actions of Pertinax; he was promoted to the most honourable posts, and afterwards raised to the consulship—that sublime dignity that drew upon him the jealousy of a large number of envious people, who could not bear he should become their equal,[2] little foreseeing that one day they were to have him for their master.

Therewas something in his countenance extremely agreeable; he had a large forehead, fair hair, gracefully and naturally curled,[3] a very majestic air, and was tall. He spoke well, and behaved upon all occasions

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[1] Dio. lib. 73.
[2] Dio. lib. 71.
[3] Spon. Recher. curi. d'Antiq.

with great affability and sweetness of temper. His principal failing was love of money, which he still exhibited even when he was Emperor. He was fond of pleasures, and we shall see that they were not always consistent with decency. He was not lacking in learning, for, before he had any military employment, he exercised that of a grammarian at Rome with great success, having succeeded in that science the famous Apollinaris, who had been his master.

Pertinax, having by his merit surmounted the disadvantage of the meanness of his birth, and having, by his great and eminent services, gained the Emperor's esteem, looked out for an alliance that might bring him influence and honour. He selected Flavia Titiana, a lady of great talent and vivacity, more inclined to consult her inclinations than her duty. She was the daughter of Flavius Sulpicianus, who on account of his riches was reckoned one of the principal senators. She was easily prevailed upon to listen to Pertinax's addresses, for, as she was of an amorous disposition, she did not hold out long against the solicitations of a handsome person, especially one who made a great figure in Rome, and might reckon upon the highest preferment. This marriage, then, was soon concluded; but neither of the parties piqued themselves upon over-strictness in conjugal

fidelity. Pertinax, in a little time, provided himself with mistresses, whom he liked better than his wife; and Titiana, by an odd sort of taste, grew so in love with a certain player upon the harp as to abandon herself without reserve to that passion; nor, indeed, did she take much pains to conceal it, for all Rome soon became acquainted with the scandalous intrigue.

It might reasonably be supposed that Pertinax would have been greatly provoked at such an infamous intrigue which so much dishonoured him, and that he would have been induced to punish his wife for so shameful and notorious a breach of chastity. However, he gave himself very little trouble about it; whether it was that, being as much to be blamed as she, he thought he had no right to reproach or punish her for a crime he was equally guilty of himself, or that he despaired of ever curing an evil that had taken too deep root; or lastly, that, being entirely taken up with Cornificia (with whom he was rather bewitched than enamoured),[1] he had no leisure to take notice of what went on at home. Be it as it may, he left Titiana at full liberty to act as she thought proper, and she made so bad a use of her opportunity that all the city were witnesses to her shamelessness.

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[1] Jul. Capitolin. in Pertin.

They passed a good part of their life after this manner. As for Titiana, her behaviour was such as entirely lost her the esteem of all modest people; but it was not so with Pertinax, for he did not find that it hurt his prospects in the least. He was made pro-consul of Africa, in which post he acquitted himself so well that Commodus, much as he hated virtue, respected his, and rewarded him with the government of Rome, in the exercise of which office Pertinax showed so much moderation and capacity that he was extremely popular with everybody, the more so because Fuscianus, his predecessor, had been rigorous and severe. This wise conduct gained Pertinax universal esteem, and contributed not a little to his being made Emperor; for after Commodus had been killed, the authors of that assassination, fearing (and with great reason) that it would be attended with dreadful consequences to them, imagined that the soldiers would be the more easily induced to overlook that affair if some person of great merit and excellent qualities were chosen to succeed him. Pertinax was thought worthy to be immediately selected for that purpose, and proclaimed Emperor; for, Commodus having been despatched in the night, and the fatal morning approaching when the conspirators were to be sacrificed to his fury, Lætus, Eclectus, and some others of their party went and knocked at Pertinax's door. The porter

had no sooner perceived Lætus with the soldiers than, seized with fear, he ran to his master's chamber to tell him that the captain of the Emperor's guards wanted to speak with him in all haste. As soon as he had said this Lætus and Eclectus entered the room.

Pertinax, to whom the untimely and tragical end of so many illustrious senators was a sufficient warning of what he had to expect, made no question that they came to put him to death by the tyrant's orders: however, he remained very calm: for, as it was no more than what he had daily expected from Commodus, who had not spared even his father's most intimate friends, he showed the greatest intrepidity, and without rising from his bed, or changing countenance, told them that, having had the honour of being very intimate with Marcus Aurelius, he was much surprised that he had been suffered to live so long; that for many years past he had expected every night to be his last. "What do you wait for, then (continued he)?[1] execute the orders of Commodus, and by giving me a speedy death, put an end to the alarms and apprehensions in which I have passed so much of my time." "Your fear wrongs your merit," answered Lætus; "it is not your life

[1] Herodian. lib. 2. c. 4.

we are come for, but our safety and the prosperity of the State. The tyrant is no more: we have made him suffer that death which he had prepared for us. We are come, then, to offer you the empire, because we know nobody so worthy of it, and are sure that the whole world will approve of our choice."

Pertinax, imagining that they were laying a snare for him to work his ruin, interrupted Lætus, and without giving him time to proceed: "Cease," said he, "to make a jest of a poor unfortunate old man, and by your flattering offers to induce me to do or say something that is to cost me my life." "Well," replied Lætus, "since you will not believe me, look at this paper, and see if it be not the handwriting of Commodus, with which you are well acquainted; read the sentence of death which was to have been executed against us to-morrow morning, and you will be sensible of the danger we have escaped." Pertinax, seeing an air of truth and sincerity in their manner of proceeding, and as they had been always his good friends, began to take courage; and at length, suffering himself to be persuaded by them, told them he was ready to do whatever they should think proper.

After Lætus and Eclectus were sure of Pertinax, they thought it absolutely necessary to sound the feelings of the legions. Lætus, who was captain of the guards, did

not doubt that he could easily bring them over to his opinion, as his rank gave him great authority in the army. In the meantime they caused the news of Commodus's death and Pertinax's election to be spread abroad, that it might be generally supposed to have been carried out with the approbation of the army.

Pertinax, however, notwithstanding all the proofs that had been given him of Commodus's death, could not feel at ease, nor prevent himself being cruelly agitated with different passions, sometimes fear, sometimes hope; for, when he reflected upon what Lætus and Eclectus had told him, he was at a loss what to think of the matter. In this uncertainty he sent one of his domestics, in whom he had entire confidence, to find out the truth; but his apprehensions were quite removed when the messenger, on his return, affirmed that he had seen the dead body of Commodus in the arms of those who were carrying him out of the palace.

In the meantime Lætus acquainted the soldiers with the death of Commodus, telling them that he had been carried off by an apoplectic fit, and proposed Pertinax as his successor, whose courage and virtue, he said, they were well acquainted with. The people expressed great joy at their deliverance from the tyranny of Commodus, and uttered loud acclamations

in honour of the new Emperor; the soldiers also, being rather hurried on by the general torrent than in pursuance of their own inclination, acknowledged Pertinax for Emperor, and took the oath of fidelity. Pertinax, amidst all the honours that were paid him, imagined he foresaw great difficulties in his way. He could not bring himself to believe that a man so obscurely born could be firmly settled on the throne which had just been filled by a prince of so noble an extraction, or that so many illustrious senators would easily acquiesce in the command of a person so infinitely beneath them. Agitated by these serious reflections, he could not help feeling very anxious and solicitous, and when he came to the Senate he would not assume, nor suffer the people to give him, any of the honours that were due to the dignity they had conferred upon him. He was, however, received in the Senate with the highest tokens of satisfaction and respect, and saluted with the titles of Emperor and August. Pertinax thanked the senators for their good will, but refused the empire on account of his age, which, he said, would not permit him to act with that vigour and circumspection so absolutely necessary for an Emperor, and which was not to be expected from a person so far advanced in life. He added that the Senate contained many members who were infinitely more capable of governing, and at the same

time taking Glabrio by the hand, who was descended from one of the most noble families in Rome, and was then in his second consulship, he would have made him sit down in the seat appointed for the Emperors. "Very well," said Glabrio, "since you think me more worthy of empire, I yield up my pretensions to you, and I join my request to that of the Senate that you will accept it." At that instant the senators all rose up, and approaching him, insisted upon his taking the place which his modesty and humility had made him refuse. As soon as he was seated, he made a speech full of wise reflections and noble maxims, entreated the Senate to partake with him the care of the State, and, after having offered the accustomed sacrifices, retired to the palace of the Emperors.

The same day that Pertinax was declared Emperor, the title of August was voted to Titiana, his wife, and the Senate, by a solemn decree, conferred that of Cæsar upon young Pertinax, the Emperor's son, but the new Emperor would not suffer his wife to accept the above title[1]; whether it was that he did not yet think himself secure enough in his authority and so was not willing that she should accept honours she might soon be forced

[1] Jul. Capitolin. in Pertin.

to give up, or that, reflecting on the meanness of his birth, he thought it inconsistent with the modesty which became him, or else, being persuaded that everybody was acquainted with Titiana's behaviour, he was ashamed that she should be honoured with a title she so ill deserved.[1] But the Senate, being resolved to acquit itself of everything that decency and politeness required, entreated the Emperor not to suffer Titiana to refuse an honour which they had with great pleasure decreed her, and which all the Empresses had accepted. Pertinax, however, with an obstinacy that agreed very well with his name, replied that it was sufficient that he himself had, at their request, accepted the sovereignty, which he confessed he was unworthy of, and that he would never consent that his son should be called Cæsar till he deserved it. And further, to show that he was not proud of his new dignity, he refused to allow his children to be brought up in the palace, nor did they ever appear with that magnificent distinction of rank and apparel which had been always bestowed upon the children of Emperors.

The excellent qualities of Pertinax, and his prudent conduct, had given everybody a high idea of his fitness

[1] Jornandes.

to rule, nor were they mistaken. He began his reign by establishing the most useful regulations. He banished from the city those pests of all society, the informers, who were such enemies to the public peace and tranquility; he suppressed the burdensome taxes which obstructed trade and commerce; he gave those lands that had been long neglected and reckoned barren to anybody who would cultivate them, and exempted them from all duties for ten years; he paid all the arrears of pensions and what was due to the officers and troops, and corrected the abuses and disorders that had crept into military discipline. His manners were in no way altered by the change of his condition, for his friends found in him the same freedom and familiarity. He conversed with them without ceremony or laying them under any disagreeable constraint; invited them to dine with him in an affable manner, and gave them the same liberty as if they were at their own houses, Titiana never sitting down with him at table when he had other company.

We do not well know how this princess conducted herself after her husband's elevation to the throne, history being almost silent in regard to this; but it is very probable that his short reign did not furnish her with many opportunities of showing whether it would

have had any influence upon her behaviour or not, for the wise changes and regulations this Emperor made not being agreeable to the soldiers, especially the Prætorians, who were accustomed to extraordinary licence under Commodus, they repented that they had chosen an old man, whose strictness was by no means suitable to their way of living, and resolved to have an Emperor who would not be so severe. Lætus fomented their discontent, for this officer, under pretext of having raised Pertinax to the empire, thought he had a right to aspire to everything. He accused the Emperor of ingratitude as often as he was refused anything, though his requests were such as could not be granted without injustice. Pretending to pity the soldiers, who, he said, had to do with an Emperor who was an enemy to their pleasure, he so animated them against him that two hundred of the most seditious went to the palace in order to put him to death.[1]

[1] Falco, a senator of very illustrious family, who was then consul, and who probably aspired to the empire, had also done his utmost to stir up the Prætorians to a revolt, and had very lately encouraged a slave of his to demand, in a most insolent manner, that Pertinax should give up the imperial palace to him, which he pretended belonged to him, being, as he said, son of Fabia, the Emperor Verus's sister. His impudence was, indeed, punished, the slave having been publicly whipped ; but that chastisement was in no way adequate to his crime, so that Pertinax's having afterwards sent the slave back to his master may be said to have been a very ill-judged piece of clemency.

The Empress Titiana no sooner perceived this mutinous troop than she ran in great fright to give the Emperor notice of the danger he was in. It certainly would have been no difficult matter for the Emperor to have driven away, or even to have killed the greater part of this audacious mob, for he had about him a sufficient guard, both of horse and foot, besides a great number of other people, who might have shut the gates of the palace; or if he had pleased he had it in his power to have retired to a place of safety till the sedition was appeased; but considering it beneath his dignity to flee at the appearance of danger, and flattering himself that his presence would soon stop the fury of the soldiers, and make them return to their allegiance, he advanced to meet the Prætorians with an air of resolution, and spoke to them thus, in a firm and intrepid tone of voice:[1]—"Is it an action that will add much to your glory, O my companions! to murder your Emperor? Thanks to the gods, I have lived long enough; nor has my behaviour been such that I should be afraid to die. No; it is but what I have expected for a long time past. But shall it ever be said that those whose duty it was to guard and protect their Emperor have been so perfidious as to assassinate him?

[1]Herodian, lib. 2.

Would it not be an eternal and indelible dishonour that future ages would reproach you with? And, after all, in what have I offended you? If you regret Commodus, did you not know that he was to die, as sure as he came into the world? And supposing it to be true that his death was not a natural one, can you accuse or even suspect me of having conspired against him? You have been witnesses of my conduct, and I am not conscious that I have given any one of you reason to complain of it, since I have never refused you anything you have required of me with the least appearance of justice."

The Emperor's presence, his grave and majestic countenance, and this moving discourse, put a stop to their fury for a time; they seemed disconcerted, and showed signs of repentance, not being able to look him in the face. They had sheathed their swords, beginning to feel ashamed of their abominable enterprise, when one of the soldiers, more insolent and brutal than the rest, ran him through the body with his sword, and encouraged the others to do the same. Eclectus, seeing the Emperor wounded, drew his sword, killed two or three of the mutineers, and defended his Emperor, till being mortally wounded himself he fell down dead, showing a rare example of loyalty and faithfulness. Pertinax, seeing them determined to kill him, covered his head with his

robe, prayed the gods to revenge his death, and never attempted to make any defence. The infamous villains, not contenting themselves with shedding his blood, were so inhuman as to cut off his head, and to carry it into their camp upon the end of a lance.

Such was the tragical end of Pertinax. He died extremely regretted by the Senate and the people, who expected from his love of justice the reformation of those abuses that Commodus had introduced. This unfortunate Prince had several presages of his death; for, three days before it happened, while he was in the bath, he saw the figure of a man threatening him with a sword; the day before he was killed the stars were observed to shine in the day as if it were night; and in the victim that was sacrificed no heart was to be found, which the heathens reckoned to foretell some grievous misfortune. He left a son and a daughter by his wife Titiana, who hoped to preserve her rank and the honours that had been paid her, when she saw that Sulpicianus, her father, had a prospect of the empire by the soldiers putting it up to auction to the highest bidder; but Julianus's intrigues got the better of him, so that Titiana had the mortification of passing the remainder of her life as a private individual.

MANLIA SCANTILLA,

WIFE OF DIDIUS JULIANUS.

It is very dangerous to follow the dictates of ambition, which generally occasions the downfall of those it has a mind to exalt. Scantilla, hurried away by her vanity, persuaded her husband to aspire to the throne, and to scatter his treasures with a liberal hand, to procure the sovereign authority ; but this advice proved fatal to him, for, by so doing, he purchased a miserable and untimely death.

Thus we frequently die martyrs to our pride. But, if we are disposed to carry our reflections further still, we may attribute Julianus's ruin to another cause ; for, if it be true that he was concerned in the murder of Pertinax, it may reasonably be concluded that Providence would not permit him long to enjoy a dignity which he had procured by so black a crime.

Marcus Didius Severus Julianus was a native of Mediolanum (Milan),[1] and grandson, through his mother,

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[1] Spartian. in Julian.

of the celebrated Salvius Julianus, the lawyer, who did so much honour to Hadrian's reign. He was brought up under the Princess Domitia Lucilla, mother of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who procured him the highest offices. He married Manlia Scantilla, by whom he had Didia Clara, whom he married to Cornelius Repentinus.

History does not inform us either of the family or character of Scantilla; but it is easy to conjecture that she had more vanity than prudence, since it was at her instigation that Julianus bought the empire at the very time when all the senators of rank and merit were trembling at the horrid assassination of Pertinax, whose misfortune served them as a warning of what was to be expected from the fury and brutality of the soldiers.

When the Prætorians had glutted themselves with the Emperor's blood, they retired into their camp, and posted sentinels to hinder the people from approaching. Their not meeting with any punishment for this execrable action increased their insolence, for, seeing that nobody attempted to revenge the death of Pertinax, and that no senator presented himself to succeed him, they had the effrontery to set up to auction the chief dignity of the world.[1] In fact, they caused a soldier, remarkable for

[1] Herodian lib. 2.

a loud voice, to mount the wall of the camp, and proclaim that the empire was to be sold, and that they would take upon them to give it to the highest bidder.

Sulpicianus, father-in-law of Pertinax, was then in the camp, having been sent thither by the late Emperor, in order to appease the soldiers, who he had heard had mutinied, but as soon as he was informed of his death, he entreated the Prætorians to choose him in his stead, and offered them great sums of money to do so; but whilst they were bargaining about the price, Julianus was told of the soldiers' resolution to sell it. He was at the table with some of his friends, and this news flattered extremely his own and his wife's ambition. Her heart immediately leaped at the throne, and the brilliancy of the enchanting object dazzled her. For, not reflecting upon the danger of this high station, though she had so recent an example of it before her eyes, she persuaded her husband to quit the table, and immediately to make an offer to the soldiers. She represented to him that, as the empire was to be sold, nobody was better able to purchase it than he, who had more money than any other senator, and that it would be the height of imprudence to lose so favourable an opportunity. Didia Clara joined her entreaties to those of her mother, that her father might not fail to procure himself an honour in which she was to

have so large a share, and of which she was, no doubt, in hopes of being one day the heiress. In short, the parasites that were at supper with Julianus importuned him to go, without losing a moment, and tempt the Prætorians with such an offer as could not be resisted; and all together solicited him so strongly that he rose from table, went directly to the camp, and shouted out to the soldiers that if they would choose him Emperor he would give what price they pleased. The guards told him what Sulpicianus had offered, and declared they would not sell it so cheap. Julianus represented to them that, in listening to Sulpicianus they did not consider what prejudice they did themselves, for that the strict alliance there was between him and Pertinax ought to be the strongest reason in the world for rejecting him, since they might be sure that he would not fail to revenge the death of his son-in-law. After having said all that was calculated to render his antagonist suspected, he made them an advantageous offer. The soldiers communicated this to Sulpicianus to try if he would give more, and this scandalous traffic lasted a considerable time, for Sulpicianus within the camp, and Julianus without, endeavoured to outbid each other.[1]

At last Julianus made so tempting an offer (also

[1] Xiphilin. in Did. Jul. Dio. lib. 73. Herodian lib. 2.

promising to pay ready money) that they immediately made him mount the walls into the camp by a ladder, for they would not open the gates. After they had agreed upon the terms, he was declared Emperor, and they gave him the surname of Commodus. In the evening they conducted him to the Senate, amidst (not the acclamations) but the imprecations of all the people, who reproached him with the infamous bargain he had made for the empire, which he had not been ashamed to purchase in so scandalous a manner.

Julianus, leaving the soldiers at the door, went into the Senate to take his place, and after he had seated himself in the Emperor's chair, he made the following infamous speech, as it has been transmitted to us by one who was present.[1] "Perceiving, O venerable fathers, that the throne is vacant, I must tell you that I think nobody more worthy to fill it than myself. I shall not take up much of your time in praising myself, or putting you in mind of my virtues, for I believe none of you are ignorant of them. I am persuaded you all know me very well, so without giving you further trouble, I beg to inform you that the army has thought proper to choose me Emperor, and I am come hither

[1] Dio. lib, 73.

that you may confirm their choice." The Senate bore with this arrogance. That timid body of men, having lost all sentiments of freedom, and being incapable of any generous resolution, declared him Emperor, elected his family into the number of patricians, and by the same decree honoured Manlia Scantilla his wife, and Didia Clara his daughter, with the sublime title of August.

Whilst all this took place in the camp and in the Senate, the two ladies, who were become princesses without knowing it themselves, were in the utmost impatience about Julianus's negotiations; but they were not long kept in suspense, for the emissaries soon let them know that the Prætorians had elected Julianus, that the Senate had not only ratified their choice, but had conferred upon them the title of August, and that the new Emperor, who was coming, desired they would meet him.[1] It is easy to conceive the joy they felt upon this occasion, for people do not often mount the throne with indifference; but it was not long before very disagreeable reflections succeeded those first transports; for, through all these flattering honours and titles, the princesses could perceive that Julianus's elevation

[1] Spart. vit. Did. Jul.

was but a melancholy forerunner of some dreadful calamity, and therefore it was not without a kind of regret that they proceeded towards the palace, which they entered with secret horror, the fear of some impending misfortune counterbalancing their present satisfaction, and not without good reason; for the first object that presented itself to their view was the body of the murdered Emperor stretched upon the ground. This tragical sight made no impression upon Julianus, but on the contrary, furnished him with matter for mirth and ridicule; for, not dreaming of this affair being attended with any bad consequences from the senators, whose approbation he had extorted, after having basely purchased the consent of the soldiers, he brutally insulted the dead body of Pertinax, of whose death he was not innocent; and, after making himself very merry about the frugal supper that had been prepared for him he ordered the most costly and delicate provisions the city could supply to be procured for him, supped most luxuriously, played at dice, and ordered the comedians to come and dance before him.[1] The yet smoking blood of his predecessor (still lying dead in the palace) was not

[1] Dio. lib. 73.

capable of moderating his excessive and ill-timed rejoicing ; nor did the probability of his meeting with the like fate (which had made Scantilla tremble) give him any sort of concern.

The day after, the senators went with all formality to the palace to pay their respects to the Emperor, and accompany him to the Senate ; they were obliged to pretend great joy at his elevation, though they were extremely afflicted. They carried, however, their flattery so far that they decreed him the title of Father of the State, and ordered a statue of silver to be made in honour of him. Julianus thanked the Senate for having confirmed the choice of the army, and for the titles they had conferred upon his wife and daughter, but was so modest, or rather so politic, as to refuse some other honours they were inclined to give him. From the Senate he went to the Capitol, still attended by the senators, who were very liberal of their false tokens of esteem ; but the people, not so skilful at dissembling, no sooner saw him than they poured out a torrent of insolent and affronting language, called him parricide, and reproached him with having usurped the throne. This taunting reception disconcerted him, but he dissembled his resentment, and, in order to appease the people who he found were enraged against

him, he promised them a great sum of money. This offer only served to exasperate them the more ; thousands of voices were heard in a moment crying out that they would have none of his money, and that he was a base villain who made it his whole business to corrupt the Romans by cunning and bribery. Then Julianus, being no longer master of his passion, commanded the guards to fall on them, who accordingly killed a great many of those who were nearest. This violence made them lose all patience ; they never ceased to pour out horrible imprecations against him and the soldiers that chose him for money, and even flung stones at him. They afterwards wept aloud for Pertinax and bitterly lamented his death. They called to their assistance the armies that were in Syria, and Niger who commanded them, whom they entreated to come speedily and avenge the detestable scandal brought upon the empire by a base and infamous usurper.

Julianus was too sensible of the consequences of these threats not to be alarmed. From that time he affected great civility towards the senators and people of distinction, and promised them all they could desire, but nobody paid any heed to these promises, because they were out of all proportion, and such as did not become an Emperor.[1] He made his son-in-law Governor of Rome,

[1] Dio. lib. 73.

and settled upon Didia Clara, his daughter, an income proportionate to her rank and her new dignity of August. In short, he omitted nothing that was necessary to strengthen and establish his authority, which was odious to everybody who had not had a hand in his election, and, in a little time, even to the soldiers who were the authors of it, because he could not pay them what he had promised. This made people inclined to believe that his power would be of no long duration; at least, there were few who did not wish it. There even happened a kind of prodigy which confirmed this opinion, and filled people's minds with superstition, for, as Julianus was offering sacrifice to the god Janus, whose statue was erected before the Senate House, three bright stars were observed near the sun. The soldiers looked earnestly at them, and said that so unusual a phenomenon must needs portend some great misfortune to Julianus. In fact, three generals soon after revolted, which made him totter on his throne: Septimius Severus, Clodius Albinus and Pescennius Niger. The first commanded in Pannonia, the other in Britain, and the last in Syria. They had great authority in their respective provinces, and were at the head of the three most considerable armies in the empire. As they have a great share in this part of the history, it will not be out of place to give some account of them.

Decimus Clodius Albinus was from Adrumetum in Africa. He belonged to a family that had furnished the State with many great men, so that whatever some authors have said to the contrary, it is certain that Albinus was of very illustrious birth. His father, Ceionius Postumius,[1] gave him the name of Albinus, because he was extremely white when he was born. He was tall, had curly hair, a high forehead, so weak a voice that it resembled that of a eunuch, and a wide mouth. He was[2] so great an eater that incredible stories are told upon that subject. He served with considerable reputation under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, the latter of whom gave him the privilege of assuming the title of Cæsar as often as he thought fit, which, notwithstanding, he never made use of. Such modesty was very agreeable to the Senate, to whom he said their ancient authority ought to be restored. In Gaul he gained several victories, which procured him the government of Britain. He perfectly understood the art of war; he was grave, and a strict observer of military discipline, but his good qualities were eclipsed by great vices; for, besides that he was a bad master and a worse husband, unjust towards his

[1] Capitolin. vit. Clod. Albi.

[2] Spon. Recher, cur. d'Antiq.

domestics and of an insupportable temper towards his wife, his behaviour was very inconsiderate towards the rest of the world; severe to an excess, the least fault[1] with him was unpardonable; he was very neat in his dress, but slovenly at his table, which was very plentiful, but not very elegant. Sometimes he drank no wine at all, and at other times would indulge in it to excess.

He frequently abandoned himself to more shameful vices, but it is mentioned amongst his virtues that he never indulged in anything that was unnatural; on the contrary, he was always an utter enemy to such practices. With all these faults and so few good qualities, we read that he was beloved by the senators and people of rank more than any other prince, to which the cruelties of Severus contributed not a little.

Pescennius Niger was descended from an equestrian family, of no great distinction, and yet not mean. He was well-built, had an engaging countenance and a ruddy complexion, his voice was so powerful that when he spoke in the camp he could be heard a thousand paces off; he wore his hair in natural curls, and it was so black that he was called Niger from it. He drank a good deal, but ate little. He had been several times consul, and

[1] Capitolin. vit. Albin.

had filled many important posts, civil and military, to the general satisfaction, having always behaved with prudence and moderation. He had given, upon all occasions, undoubted proofs of his zeal and devotion to the public welfare. He was very rigorous in matters of military discipline, keeping the soldiers strictly to their duty, by remonstrances as well as his own example, and making them carefully avoid luxury and everything that was likely to diminish their courage; for when he was encamped near the Nile, on the soldiers desiring he would allow them wine, he answered that he was surprised at their request, considering how near they were to the river. He is accused of having been a great dissembler, ambitious, fickle, and a slave to his pleasures, which cost him the empire. It was said of him[1] that he was a good soldier, an excellent officer, an admirable general, an illustrious consul, a man who distinguished himself in peace and war, but an unfortunate Emperor; and when his virtues are compared with his vices, it will be found[2] that the former were not such as to entitle him to great commendation, nor were the latter so glaring as to justify his being called a bad man.

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[1] Spart. vit. Pescen. Nig.

[2] Dio. lib. 74.

Septimius Severus was a native of Leptis in Africa. His name agreed very well with his disposition, for he was cruel, vindictive, and furious. He was reckoned the most covetous of all the Emperors, for in his actions and projects he never had anything in view but his own advantage. Never was man a greater master of dissimulation, so that his heart[1] and his tongue never agreed, as he was cunning and deceitful. He expressed the greatest friendship for such as he was most desirous to deceive, concealing his deep designs under a fair appearance of frankness and sincerity, being neither afraid nor ashamed to make use of the most execrable oaths and imprecations that people might give credit to what he said, in order to deceive them the more easily. He was very skilful in the art of war, for which he had the greatest genius of any of the Roman Emperors, and especially he was an extremely capable commander.[2] As he was vigilant and indefatigable, and possessed, in short, all the requisite qualities that are necessary to make a perfect general, so it may be said that he was more indebted to his own extraordinary talents for his preferment than to Fortune. He was an enemy not only

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[1] Herodian, lib. 2. Vict. Epit. 1, Dio. lib. 76.

[2] Dio. lib. 75.

to idleness, but to rest, for when he had but a few moments to live he asked if there was not something to do. He had a very vigorous and robust constitution,[1] till he was violently attacked by the gout. His countenance was majestic, his hair was fair and curly, he wore his beard long, and had a most melodious voice. He was not expensive either in his dress or table. In his youth he had been guilty of very bad actions, notwithstanding which, by the favour of his uncle, Septimius Severus, he was made a senator. Marcus Aurelius gave him the quæstorship, and afterwards named him proconsul of Africa, where he gave a very brutal instance of his severity. An eminent citizen of Leptis, meeting him one day in the street, went to salute him, thinking that as there had formerly been great intimacy between them he might venture to take that liberty; but Severus ordered that he should be immediately beaten with a stick, saying at the same time,[2] "My friend, take care another time how you treat a Roman magistrate with too much familiarity." Commodus promoted him still higher, at the request of Lætus, his favourite; for, after having given him several posts, in all which he behaved with

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[1] Dio. lib. 76.

[2] Spart. vit. Sev.

great rigour, he made him commander-in-chief of all the armies in Illyria.

Such were the three generals who revolted against Julianus, and disputed for the empire. Rome and all the provinces were divided into factions, parties, and cabals; the horrors of the famous triumvirate, which cost Rome so much blood, were renewed. Of these three competitors Niger seemed the most powerful, for, besides that his command was the most considerable (as it extended not only all over Syria, but reached also through Phœnicia, and all the countries bordering upon the Euphrates), he possessed the affections of the Romans, who looked upon him as a man extremely zealous for the State, and the only person that could make them amends for the loss of Pertinax, whose virtues they said he possessed. He was extremely beloved by the troops, and much esteemed in Syria, where he had governed with the greatest lenity and mildness.

Severus was neither so well beloved nor so powerful, but he was more active, more laborious, and more crafty than Niger; very skilful at making the most of conjunctures and events, and nobody was so capable of conducting an affair of importance. As for Albinus, the only thing in which he had an advantage over the other two was his age;[1] so he was reckoned more capable of making

[1] Capitolin. in Albin.

another person Emperor than of being a good Emperor himself.

Niger was informed of what took place at Rome; he was told that the people only waited for him to choose him Emperor, that they hated Julianus, and that even the soldiers who had raised him to the throne could not endure him. In short, they advised him not to delay a moment his coming to Rome, where everyone was for him. Niger, who was not inclined to take so important a step without mature consideration, assembled the officers of his army and the principal people of Syria, to whom he communicated the letters he had received from Rome. They all solicited him to take advantage of the favourable disposition of the people towards him, and promised to risk their lives for his service. Niger was very glad to find them so zealous for his interests, but, that they might never afterwards accuse him of having undertaken this affair of his own accord, "I protest to you," said he, "that it is not ambition that prompts me to deprive Julianus of the empire, but I cannot refuse the Roman people the assistance they ask from me against a tyrant that oppresses them.[1] The empire stands in need of someone to manage it; I am invited to Rome for that

[1] Herod. lib. 2.

purpose, but I will do nothing without your approbation, for, since you are willing to share with me the dangers and difficulties of this undertaking, it is but reasonable that I should be guided by your counsels." Nothing was then to be heard but acclamations and shouts of joy; the army and the people strove who should first proclaim him Emperor; he was invested with the purple robe, and all the other imperial ornaments, conducted in state into the temples of Antioch, and afterwards to his house, which they had taken care to adorn with all the insignia of sovereignty. Fame soon carried the news of his election to the most distant provinces, and ambassadors arrived from all the neighbouring Kings and Satraps to congratulate him upon his elevation to the empire, and to offer him their assistance. He received them with all possible tokens of gratitude and generosity, thanked them for their courtesy, but answered that he hoped there would be no occasion to take up arms or shed blood to establish his empire. In fact, imagining that he had nothing to fear, instead of going directly to Rome to get his election confirmed by the Senate, he amused himself with one diversion or other at Antioch, and endeavoured to gain the hearts of the Syrians by entertaining them with games, shows, and races, which were extremely agreeable to those people, who are very fond of things of that nature.

Severus, in the meantime, being well informed of all these matters, and seeing the empire within the grasp of anybody who would seize it, assumed in Pannonia the title of Emperor, but proceeded with more caution. He exaggerated to the officers of his army and the soldiers the miserable condition to which the empire was reduced by the unworthiness of him whom the Prætorians had chosen for money, and by that means had rendered venal the first dignity in the world. He represented to them the inhuman massacre of the Emperor Pertinax, whose merit they were well acquainted with, having so often experienced his goodness when they served under him. He then encouraged them to revenge that horrible murder, and concealing his design with this specious pretence, he managed them so cleverly that they proclaimed him Emperor with great demonstrations of joy, and gave him the surname of Pertinax, which was much respected in Illyria. He did not stop there, for he distributed a large sum of money among the troops, and made magnificent promises to the officers of his army, and the governors of provinces, without the least intention of fulfilling them. By his cunning and intrigues he won over the armies in Gaul;[1] and after he had secured all those from whom

[1] Spart. in Sever.

he thought he had anything to fear, he determined to set out directly for Rome. But he was not one of those who look no further than the present; he reflected that, after having conquered Julianus,[1] he would have Niger and Albinus to deal with. The first, indeed, did not appear very formidable, because of his indolence and want of activity; and he despised the second, as being, in his opinion, a greater lover of pleasure than glory, and not capable of carrying out any noble enterprise;[2] but he was much afraid of having them both on his hands at once, which it was his business by all means to hinder. In order to effect this he made use of a stratagem, which succeeded admirably. He entered into a sham treaty with one of his competitors, to prevent their coming to a real agreement. He thought it would be a vain attempt to make any proposals to Niger, who was so elevated with the invitations he had received from Rome that he could never be brought to compound for anything less than the empire; but he concluded that Albinus would probably lend a favourable ear to his offers, because he knew him to be naturally credulous. Besides, Severus imagined it was more to his interest to treat with Albinus,

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[1] Dio. lib. 72.
[2] Herod. lib. 2.

who, being nearer to him than Niger, might be in a condition, with the troops he commanded in Britain, to dispute the throne with him. It was, therefore, to him that he addressed himself, sending him a trusty officer with a very courteous letter. He communicated to him his design of delivering Rome from the tyranny under which it groaned under Julianus; made him an offer of dividing the sovereign authority with him, and even solicited and exhorted him to take upon himself the government of the empire, "which," said he, "stands in so great need of a chief nobly descended, and in every way qualified to restore it to its ancient splendour, such as is not to be met with but in you." And, in order the more effectually to deceive him and remove all grounds of mistrust, he wrote a letter to the Senate full of commendations of Albinus, who, he said, was worthy of the throne; and immediately caused money to be coined with his image, which he assiduously circulated, and erected statues in honour of him as to an Emperor.

Albinus was the more easily drawn into this snare, as he did not love fatigue or trouble, though his valour was never called in question. He flattered himself with the hopes of enjoying supreme power without running any risk to acquire it. He accordingly accepted the offer of Severus, and remained very quiet in Britain, waiting for the issue of this important affair.

Severus, having nothing more to fear from that quarter, endeavoured to convince his troops that they were all perfectly safe with regard to Niger. "Can you," said he, "apprehend any danger from the army in Syria, which is composed of voluptuous and effeminate Orientals, who have never been accustomed to the hardships of war? You see that Niger, instead of hastening to Rome, is plunging himself into all the luxuries of Antioch, and gives his legions no other occupation than that of seeing sports and shows. Know," said he, with a confident and haughty air, "that, at the first report of my election, the Syrian legions will be glad to join me. My name is not unknown to them, and they will not be desirous of contending with my troops, who, they are well assured, surpass them in number, as well as in courage and experience. Come, let us, without further loss of time, set out for Rome, and we shall soon see that all obstacles will fall before us. We will revenge the deplorable death of that venerable old man, of Pertinax, who was so worthy to command, and of whose virtues you can never be unmindful." This speech so encouraged the soldiers that they were eager to march, and wished for nothing so much as the word of command. Severus, like a crafty and experienced man, took advantage of this ardour, and immediately directed his course towards Rome, without

quitting his arms or loitering upon the road, except just to give them time to breathe. He gained a wonderful hold upon their affections during this long march, by living with them in a familiar manner, without ceremony or distinction. He constantly wore his armour, fared just as his soldiers did, and in short, put himself more upon the footing of a companion than a general.

The news of Severus's approach soon reached Rome. Julianus, who did not in the least suspect him, was strangely surprised when he heard of his revolt. He went immediately to the Senate, and obliged them to declare Severus an enemy to the State. They also pronounced the same sentence against the soldiers of his army, if they did not quit him and return to their allegiance in a certain number of days. In consequence of this, Aquillius, who had caused the death of so many senators under Commodus, was sent to assassinate Severus; and Valerius Catulinus was appointed to take the command of the forces in his stead, as if it had been so easy a matter for a senator to displace a general at the head of such a numerous body of troops, who adored him. In the meantime, Julianus made great presents to the Prætorians, besides paying them all that he had formerly promised, in order to bespeak their favour. He caused some regiments of horse to enter the city,[1] and

[1] Herodian. lib. 2.

sent for the marines from the port of Misenum. Nothing was then to be seen in Rome but bustle and confusion, arms, encampments, and disturbance, as if it had been an enemy's country. The soldiers,[1] horses, and elephants were regularly trained and exercised to prepare them for battle, which threw the citizens into great consternation; in the midst of which, however, nobody could forbear laughing to see Julianus very busy fortifying the palace with gates and iron bars, remembering that Pertinax would not have been killed if the Prætorians had found him so well prepared—foolish precautions, which sufficiently showed the timidity of that prince, and only served to expose him to the ridicule of all the world. It was then that he caused Marcia and Lætus to be put to death; divine justice had decreed that the murderers of Commodus should sooner or later meet with their deserts, for assassins have nothing better to expect.

In the meantime Severus, having taken all the towns in Italy, throughout which the terror of so formidable an army had caused a general panic, hurried towards Rome, where he had already found means, by one stratagem or another, to introduce a great many of his soldiers. This quite disconcerted Julianus, who could perceive that

[1] Dio. lib. 73.

everybody was ready to forsake him and join the conqueror. The Prætorians, who had given him the empire, were no longer able to defend him, even if they had been willing; for, having been long accustomed to pleasure and idleness, they were so destitute of skill and courage as to be scarcely capable of military duties, and besides, they had no real affection for Julianus. In this perplexity he assembled the Senate, and requested that they would depute some of their body, together with the priests and vestal virgins,[1] to approach Severus, and entreat him not to disturb the peace of the city, and destroy the liberties of the State, as if a few religious ceremonies could stop soldiers, who are seldom much troubled with qualms of that nature. For this reason the Senate represented to him how useless it would be to have recourse to such fruitless expedients, and Quintillus, who had been consul, took the liberty of telling him that a prince who had not courage to fight his enemies was not worthy of the empire, and this bold reproach was supported by several other senators. Julianus was so provoked that he immediately ordered the soldiers to compel the Senate to obey, or else to fall upon and massacre them; but as he found his authority extremely

[1] Spart. vit. Julian.

weakened, he thought it best to abandon his foolish and mad intention, and going in person to the Senate he caused them to issue a decree, by which he associated Severus with himself in the empire, and sent Crispinus to him with the decree, having at the same time given him secret orders to destroy him. Severus, not being easily imposed upon, suspected the truth, refused the proposal, sent Julianus word that he would rather have him for an enemy than a colleague, and, by the advice of his officers, sent after Crispinus, and had him arrested and put to death, which was acknowledged to be the just punishment of his base undertaking. Thus this unworthy Emperor, not knowing which way to turn, had recourse to strange, extravagant, and unusual religious ceremonies, ridiculously hoping by those means to change the hearts of the Romans, and make their arms drop out of the hands of his enemies. He also took it into his head to make use of certain magical enchantments, by way of learning what was to happen to him, but gained nothing by his impious curiosity ; for the near approach of Severus, to whom all the towns had readily submitted, soon taught him that a great deal more than his iniquitous sacrifices was necessary to disarm those victorious legions, and that if magical practices can hurt anybody, it is only those who employ them. In this extremity he had a mind to

give up the empire to Pompeianus, son-in-law of Marcus Aurelius, who was then at Terracina;[1] but that wise senator, who looked upon this offer as a gift which it was not in Julianus's power to make him a present of, returned him thanks very politely, but pleaded his usual infirmities and excused himself. At last Julianus, being quite at a loss what to do, and forsaken by all the world (even the Prætorians who had elected him, upon Severus's promising them that they should be forgiven, provided they offered no opposition and delivered up the murderers of Pertinax), retired, with Repentinus, his son-in-law, into the palace, and there began to lament and bewail his miserable condition.

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[1] Pompeianus had a house at Terracina, whither he always retired when any change happened at Court, or when he found it necessary to screen himself against whatever attempts the Emperors might make to destroy him. Pertinax offered him the empire, but he excused himself on account of his great age, and a disorder of the eyes, which, however, was reported to be only a pretended one; for, towards the end of Commodus's reign, finding that that tyrant had put to death the most illustrious of the senators, he was violently seized with the pain in his eyes, and never appeared in the Senate; but as soon as Pertinax (whom he knew to be a wise and good prince) was on the throne, he attended the Senate as formerly, and had no further ailment. Again, when Pertinax was massacred his pain returned, and he retired to Terracina, where he was when Julianus sent for him to offer him the empire, but his eyes would not permit him to accept it. This, nevertheless, would not in all probability have been any hindrance to him if another Pertinax had been elected.

In the meantime Messalla, who was consul, having assembled the Senate in the Temple of Minerva, laid before them the state of affairs. The death of Julianus was the first matter discussed. Severus was declared Emperor, and it was also resolved that Pertinax should have divine honours. Two deputations, very different from each other, were despatched. The most distinguished senators were sent to Severus to carry him the imperial ornaments and invite him to Rome, to take possession of the throne, which the Senate prayed him to accept. At the same time others were despatched to kill Julianus. They found him in the palace in a pitiable condition, and endeavouring in vain to implore the clemency of Severus, to whom he offered to yield up the empire, desiring only that he might be allowed to live. The tribune, without minding his expostulations, executed their orders and despatched him, the unhappy prince crying out all the while, "What harm have I done; have I put anybody to death?" Thus the unfortunate Julianus purchased, at the expense of his life, the pleasure of reigning two months.

The death of this poor Emperor occasioned, as may well be supposed, the most bitter affliction to Scantilla, his wife, and to Didia Clara, their daughter. We have seen that at their first entrance into the palace they had a

sort of presentiment of what was to happen, and that they had the mortification of seeing it verified by the tragical end of this prince, which was entirely owing to their ambition and imprudent advice. They begged Severus to give them leave to bury him in the tomb of his ancestors. The new Emperor did not refuse them this request. He spared their lives, but deprived them of the sublime title of August, and took away from Didia Clara the patrimony that her father had settled upon her. Thus these two princesses, after enjoying for a very short time the shadow of empire, fell into their original obscurity. It seemed as if the highest rank in the universe had been lent them for two months, only that Fortune might have an opportunity of making them feel more sensibly the weight of their disgrace.

JULIA,

WIFE OF SEVERUS,

AND

PLAUTILLA,

WIFE OF CARACALLA.

JULIA, wife of Severus, was one of the Empresses who made most noise in the world. Her high position, gallantries, love of knowledge, and esteem for learned men, her troubles, and even her death, have made her name famous in history. Fortune raised her from a comparatively humble position to the first dignity of the world, and afterwards plunged her into the deepest afflictions; so that the different events of which her history is composed, the sorrows, anxieties and vexations that she suffered, the secret annoyances that agitated her heart under the appearance of grandeur and amidst all the pomp and splendour that surrounded her, have made even a heathen confess that there is no rank so elevated, no prosperity so complete, as to afford perfect happiness upon earth.

Julia Domna Pia was born at Emesa, a town in Phœnicia, daughter of Julia Soemias, and of Bassianus, priest of the sun, which the Phœnicians adored under the name of Elagabalus. She had a sister called Julia Maesa, who by her marriage with Julius Avitus, a native of Apamea, had two daughters, Soemias and Mamea; the eldest was mother of Avitus Bassianus, known afterwards by the name of Heliogabalus; and of Mamea, who was the youngest, was born Varius Alexianus, who was afterwards called Alexander Severus. Julia's family was not very illustrious, but the high rank to which this Syrian arrived made amends for any deficiency in point of descent. We shall see that these four women had no small share in the affairs of the empire, during the reigns of Severus, Caracalla, Macrinus, Heliogabalus and Alexander.

Julia was very beautiful, and by nature had the strongest inclination to make a bad use of her charms. Everybody who saw her was captivated by her, many found her far from cruel, and her licentious life sufficiently proves that beauty and discretion are not often to be met with in the same person. She had a most agreeable humour and ample wit, but was artful,[1] malicious, and

[1] Spart. in Carac.

full of dissimulation, as the Syrians generally are. She had a very fertile imagination, a wonderful facility in seeing through the most difficult affairs, and so true a judgment that, among a variety of sentiments and opinions, she seldom failed to choose the best; for which reason the Emperor Severus, who was well acquainted with his wife's unerring instinct, consulted her upon all important occasions, and was frequently guided by her counsels. Her judgment was very sound, she spoke with grace, and wrote elegantly; she was capable of managing the most intricate intrigues of the cabinet, so that it is generally believed that Caracalla had no minister or Secretary of State who could better acquit himself in the duties of his office than Julia his mother did, as long as she managed affairs. She cultivated those rare talents she had received from nature by a close application to learning, philosophy, geometry, and all the sciences; she also spent a large proportion of her time[1] in the useless study of judicial astrology, and loved to be in the company of sophists and other learned men, whose conversation she much admired. Happy would it have been for her if she had never desired any that was more dangerous; and if, whilst training her mind with philosophical ideas and notions, she

[1] Dio; Philostrat. vit. Apollon.

had also equipped her heart with wise and useful maxims. But those grave and serious occupations did not so entirely employ her thoughts, as to prevent her finding time to gratify inclinations that were not so commendable. As, like the rest of her nation, she was prodigiously fond of sports, shows, and all those diversions that flatter the senses, she never appeared more beautiful than upon those occasions, when she was sure to make conquests. She was always then in high spirits, full of life and vivacity, which could not fail to procure her a crowd of lovers, who certainly did not amuse her with philosophical topics alone. She was soon as skilled in affairs of gallantry as in more serious matters, and, suffering herself to be hurried on by her desires, she indulged herself in liberties that dishonoured her. This charming Syrian was also as greedy of honours as of pleasure, and her heart (softened as it was with luxury) was fully as susceptible of ambition as of any other passion, which was fostered and fortified by the hopes[1] of that high and brilliant fortune which her horoscope had promised her.

Julia was in the height of her beauty when she left Phœnicia to display her charms at Rome. Whether it was that she had any particular business that obliged her

[1] Spartian. in Sever.

to undertake that journey, or that, being elated with flattering hopes from her noble extraction, she did not think Emesa a town important enough to afford her opportunities of pushing her fortune, she repaired to the capital of the world, which she looked upon as the proper stage for her to appear on, in order to advance herself, which she thought could the more easily be brought about there because of the frequent changes and revolutions that happened in that city. She depended entirely on her beauty, and her own skill in managing it to the best advantage, together with the favourable predictions she had of her future grandeur; nor was she mistaken in her conjectures, for, soon after, she married Severus, whose birth and family we have already taken notice of, as also of the offices with which Marcus Aurelius had honoured him. He was tribune of the people when he married Marcia, of whose family and country we do not find that any certain account can be given; nor have we any proofs of either her virtue or of her husband's affection for her, except this, that, after he was become Emperor, he erected statues in honour of her memory long after her death. Severus had two daughters by her, both of whom (according to a modern author) were called Septimia, after their father. We shall see what was their destiny. Marcia died soon after Severus's return from Gaul, and it was not

long before he had thoughts of a second marriage. He had, for a considerable time past, had certain presages[1] of the sovereign authority. These pleasing auguries flattered his ambition very agreeably, and, as he was not a man to neglect anything that could contribute to his advancement, he looked out for a wife who might enter into his pretensions and assist his projects. In order to find one fitted for his purpose he secretly consulted the astrologers about the persons who were proposed to him, and particularly whether they were destined to high advancement, for he had great faith in those fooleries and superstitions. He was told there was a Syrian woman concerning whom the most skilful augurs had foretold that whoever married her would one day be Emperor.

These lofty hopes and expectations Severus reckoned as the greatest merit in Julia, for, though her beauty was sufficient to captivate any heart, yet Severus laid much greater stress upon the extraordinary degree of power and authority he was to acquire by her means. The conformity there seemed to be between what was foretold of him and the predictions concerning Julia made him believe that they were marked out for each other, so that Severus's thoughts were from that time devoted to bringing about this marriage, for which purpose he set his

[1] Dio. lib. 77. Spart. in Sever. Xiphilin.

friends to work, and they met with all the success they could desire. Severus had a very considerable reputation at Court, having received from the Emperor great marks of his esteem, for, though he had many faults, yet he was too cunning not to conceal them. So Julia, looking upon him as a man who could not fail of preferment, accepted his proposals. Their nuptials were celebrated in the Temple of Venus[1] near the palace, and the Empress Faustina, who must needs honour the ceremony with her presence, was so obliging as to cause an apartment to be prepared for them in the palace.

Amidst all his matrimonial pleasures Severus was not unmindful of his interests. He was persuaded that an idle, voluptuous life would conduct him neither to glory nor promotion, and that nothing less than an extraordinary reputation was capable of raising a man to offices of importance, so he was determined to lay hold of every opportunity of showing his talents. Marcus Aurelius, who set a great value upon him, made him Governor of Gaul, and he behaved there with so much moderation that he gained a wonderful hold upon the hearts and affections of the people. Julia, who accompanied her husband

[1] Dio. lib. 74.

on his journey,[1] was brought to bed of a son at Lugdunum (Lyons), whom they called Bassianus, after his grandfather by the mother's side, and who was afterwards surnamed Caracalla. About two years after she bore another son at Rome, who was called Geta.

It is not necessary to mention here the troubles in which Rome was involved after the murder of Commodus, since we have already treated of those matters, as also of Severus's pretence for conducting to Rome the army that he commanded, and which had declared him Emperor. As soon as they were informed of his approach, the Senate (who out of complaisance to Julianus had declared him an enemy to the State, which had greatly offended him), being apprehensive that he would revenge the affront, were very desirous to make peace with him, and endeavoured by all the means they could think of to gain his goodwill. A hundred of the senators went to the camp to pay him their respects, and congratulate him upon his arrival in the name of the whole body. Severus declared that he was only come to revenge the murder of Pertinax, and as this was the honourable motive of his errand with which he concealed his ambition, he punished very rigorously all those who were concerned

[1] Aurel. Vict. Epit. Eutrop.

in that prince's death. He ordered the Prætorians to present themselves before him, not with their arms, but adorned with laurel branches, in the same manner as when they assisted at the shows or any public ceremony. He made them believe they were to take the oath of fidelity, and flattered them with fine promises. The Prætorians, not suspecting anything, made their appearance accordingly, unarmed and covered with laurel, as upon a day of rejoicing. But they were no sooner come into the presence of the Emperor, who was seated upon a throne, than, on a signal that had been agreed upon, they were surrounded by the soldiers of the army, who, turning towards them the points of their spears and javelins, put it out of their power to make the least defence. Then Severus, looking on them with an air of indignation, thus addressed them. "If I intended to chastise you in proportion to your crimes, I should be at a loss to find out a punishment rigorous enough. You have not been ashamed to dip your hands in the blood of that venerable old man and worthy Emperor, whom it was your duty to have defended at the expense of your lives; and the empire of the world, which our ancestors looked upon as the greatest reward of virtue and nobility, you have most scandalously put up to auction, as a thing of small value. But what further enhances your guilt is

that, instead of maintaining Julianus in the supreme dignity which you were pleased to sell him, you have most perfidiously betrayed him. However (base and unworthy wretches as you are), it is not my intention to make you expiate by your death that of Pertinax, whom you brutally assassinated, but, on the other hand, I will not trust myself with soldiers who make nothing of perjury, and the most heinous crimes, whose swords are yet besmeared with the blood of their Emperor whom they have murdered. You shall be indebted to me for your lives, undeserving as you are to breathe the common air; but that you may everywhere carry about you the marks of that justice which I owe to the memory of Pertinax, I command my faithful soldiers to strip you instantly of every military ornament, which shall not any longer be dishonoured by you, and at the same time I charge you at your peril to be gone far from hence, and to suffer, in some distant place, the eternal shame of your infamous actions; and if any of you be ever found within a hundred thousand paces of Rome, I swear that you shall be put to death without mercy." This order was executed on the spot. These miserable assassins were immediately divested of all their military insignia, and banished in the most ignominious manner. Severus was received in Rome

with great demonstrations of joy. His entry was as magnificent as the most superb triumph. The Romans, to show their satisfaction, wore white robes, and crowned themselves with flowers; the senators in their robes of ceremony saluted the Emperor at the gate of the city, and assured him of the sincerity of their vows for his prosperous reign. That day everything wore the look of joy and gladness, and nothing was to be seen in the streets but flowers, crowns of laurel, and fires, in which were consumed great quantities of perfumes in honour of the Emperor's arrival. Nothing was to be heard but shouts and acclamations. The people strove with one another who should shew the greatest marks of esteem and respect, and everybody was so desirous to see the Emperor that prodigious numbers climbed upon walls and other eminences to get a sight of him and hear him speak, as if Fortune had presented them with something quite new, and till then unheard of.

Severus went the next day to the Senate, and made a courteous speech, but a very artful one. He protested that he would never have consented to his election but in order to revenge the death of Pertinax, and to restore the ancient families to their former glory and splendour. That he would never put any senator to death except he were first condemned by the Senate; that he would not

encourage or listen to informers; that in his manner of governing he would take Marcus Aurelius for a model, and that he would not only take the name of Pertinax, but also his character. These fair-sounding words were generally approved; but several of the old senators, who had been long acquainted with Severus, whispered that it would not be prudent to reckon too much upon the promises of an artful man, who had never kept his word any further than was consistent with his own interest. In the meantime, the Senate decreed to Severus all the honours that had been bestowed on preceding Emperors; nor was Julia forgotten. The Senate conferred upon her the title of August, together with that of Mother of the State and also of the Armies, and several others that flattery thought proper to invent. Then were the happy predictions accomplished. She saw herself exalted to that rank which her birth had given her hopes of, nor was she at all inclined to lose or waive any of her privileges, for elevation and prosperity did not fail to produce in her the ordinary effects,—pride and insolence. Intoxicated with her high fortune, she remembered no more by what steps she had climbed up to it. She treated with haughtiness, and even contempt, the greatest persons in the empire, and looked upon herself as infinitely superior to those who a little before were greatly above her.

Severus greatly endeared himself to the Romans, by procuring immortality to Pertinax, whose memory everybody had the greatest respect for, also by the sports and rejoicings that followed his entry into Rome. The marriage of the two princesses his daughters furnished him with another opportunity of diverting the people with games and shows. One of them he gave to Aetius, whom he made consul, and the other to the consul Probus, upon whom he would have conferred the government of the city, but he was politic enough to refuse it, for, the better to make his court to the Emperor, he alleged that he regarded the honour of being his son-in-law as infinitely above what that office could procure him. These nuptials were celebrated with all the pomp imaginable, for Severus omitted nothing that could possibly contribute to their magnificence, knowing how acceptable those sumptuous shows were to the people.

He heaped favours upon his two sons-in-law, made several very useful regulations, and having settled matters in Rome, set out for the East to fight Niger, who was so taken up with the luxuries of Antioch that he never dreamed of war. Severus's expedition was attended with all the success he could desire.[1] A bloody battle was

[1] Herodian. Spartian.

fought in Cilicia, where Niger's troops were defeated, and he himself was forced to flee with precipitation; but that did not save him, for he was wounded near Cyzicus, by some of Severus's people, and was found half dead in a bog. In this condition he was brought before the conqueror, who immediately ordered his head to be struck off and sent to Rome.

The Emperor made a very cruel use of his victory, for he put to death most of the senators who had taken the part of Niger, and banished the rest. He punished rigorously those towns that had afforded him any assistance, or shown him any affection. Byzantium (now Constantinople) felt the fury of the soldiers and the resentment of Severus; and Emesa would have experienced the terrible effects of his indignation if the Empress Julia had not stood in the gap, and solicited pardon for her country. He caused Niger's wife and children to be put to death, and by this extreme severity made himself very odious; for which reason there was hardly anybody that did not desire Albinus for Emperor, because of his sweet disposition. It is even credibly reported that, during Severus's stay in the East, many of the most illustrious senators wrote to Albinus and entreated him to come to Rome.[1] Severus being

[1] Capitolin. in Albin.

informed of this, conceived a mortal hatred against Albinus, and endeavoured to get rid of him by all manner of base and treacherous means; but these only turning to his own confusion, he declared war against him without further ceremony, being persuaded thereto by Julia. This princess, perceiving that Albinus was much more beloved than Severus, and that the number of his well-wishers would prodigiously increase if he had time to make friends and the necessary preparations, induced her husband to break with him and march against him. She met with no great difficulty in making the Emperor (over whom she had acquired an absolute power) do whatever she had a mind to. At the first sign of the war nothing was to be seen in the empire but troubles, cabals, and factions. Foreign princes, distant towns, and even the senators espoused the interests, some of Albinus and others of Severus; so that the people, being fatigued with these disputes, which exhausted both their blood and treasure, declared openly that they were quite weary of them. Besides this, there happened a sort of prodigy that filled people's minds with fear and superstition;[1] a kind of fire appeared in the air, so bright and flaming, that they were afraid the

[1] Dio. lib. 75.

city was going to be reduced to ashes. But soon after, they were agreeably relieved from this apprehension, when they perceived a small shower like dew falling, which seemed white like silver. In fact, some having taken it in their heads to wash pieces of brass with this water, it gave them the colour of silver; but this whiteness disappeared in a little time, and the pieces remained brass as before.

The issue of this war was not favourable to Albinus; he was beaten near Lugdunum, and his defeat secured the empire to Severus. Never was a conqueror more brutally cruel; he cut off Albinus's head and sent it to Rome; he put to death the wife and children of his enemy, and fell with unparalleled cruelty upon all his adherents, and after having shed their blood confiscated their estates. His revenge extended afterwards to Rome, where he caused the strictest search to be made after all those of Albinus's party, and under pretence of punishing them, he seized upon their possessions, and filled his coffers with their riches. Nothing took place in the city but accusations, executions, and funerals. The noblest of the senators —men who had been consuls and Roman knights—forfeited, for supposed crimes, not only their lives, but also their fortunes, which Severus immediately took possession of, for his covetousness was equal to his cruelty. Never

had there been an Emperor so greedy of money. The vast treasures that he heaped up only served to whet his appetite, and make him still desire more. He exacted with the utmost severity the usual taxes, and invented new ones, for fear, said he, of some unforeseen accident, thus making his insatiable covetousness pass for wise precaution: so that his thirst after money was as fatal to Rome as the most cruel war.

It is astonishing that a prince of such a temper and so inflexible in his resentment should be so insensible to his wife's gallantries, who indulged without reserve those appetites that highly dishonoured both the Emperor and herself; for Severus could not be ignorant that the Empress did not scruple to abandon herself to her shameful pleasures, which were known to all. Severus, however so cruel to all the rest of the world, carried his complaisance for her to such a degree that he appeared ignorant of those prostitutions which he ought to have chastised. She was so artful that, by her insinuating and well-timed caresses, she could calm him in the midst of his fury, and manage him as she thought proper. In fact, she was so confident of the power she had over him that, if some historians are to be credited, she was not afraid of entering into a conspiracy against him, being well assured that she would be able to extricate herself from the consequences in case it should be discovered, as indeed it

happened; for, in spite of certain knowledge he had that his wife was privy to the plot, he showed her the greatest marks of kindness and affection, and treated her as if she had been the best wife in the world. This appeared upon the following occasion. Severus, being one day so very desirous to know who was to succeed him that it made a strong impression on his mind, dreamed that a person called Antoninus would reign after him; and so, taking it for granted that this was an infallible prediction, he brought his son Bassianus, who was his favourite, into the camp, and gave him[1] the name of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, in the presence of all the legions.

Julia, who loved Geta, the younger of her two sons, much more than Bassianus, the elder, represented to him that by having given Bassianus only the surname of Antoninus, which was a presage of the empire, he seemed to exclude his second son from that dignity. Severus, finding that the Empress was desirous that Geta should have the same chance as his brother, was unable to refuse her that satisfaction, and though the dream only called upon one Antoninus to be Emperor, Julia's will prevailed over that of the gods, so great was the Emperor's complaisance for her. He did not carry it so

[1] Spart. in Sev. in Get.

far in regard to his sister. She had quitted Leptis, the place of her birth, and came to Rome, bringing with her a son that she had. The Court showed her all possible honour and respect, for her being so nearly related to the Emperor procured her the homage of all people of quality and distinction; but all this was to be attributed to courtesy and politeness, not to her merit, for her coarse and rustic air, together with her not being able to express herself in Latin except in a ridiculous manner, instead of bespeaking the favour of the people, had a contrary effect, and furnished sufficient matter for raillery and laughter. Severus, who saw nothing agreeable in his sister, was ashamed of her, and annoyed at her arrival, for which reason he made them some presents and sent them both back again to Leptis.

About the same time Mæsa, sister to the Empress, also arrived at Rome, and brought thither her two daughters, Soemias and Mamea. They met with a kinder reception and more courteous treatment than the Emperor's sister, and, to tell the truth, they were of quite different characters.[1] Mæsa was a lady of infinite merit, prudent and virtuous beyond the reach of calumny—of a genius capable of penetrating the most intricate sciences.

[1] Herodian. Lamprid. Spartianus.

Never was there a woman who better understood the practice or constitution, as one may say, of the Court. She was as skilful at concealing her own sentiments as at penetrating those of others, and knew how to make all events turn to her advantage. It was evident that the elevation of Heliogabalus, and afterwards of Alexander, her grandsons, to the throne, was due to her policy and courage. She acquired in Severus's Court such experience in politics as stood her in good stead afterwards. She lived in the strictest intimacy and friendship with Julia, very cunningly shutting her eyes against the notorious irregularities of her sister, while she carefully avoided making herself disagreeable by reproaches and remonstrances, which never fail to give offence. She always showed the greatest deference and respect to Severus, for which reason he was very fond of her, and so complaisant that she could do almost what she pleased with him, and as she was extremely clever at foreseeing events long before they happened, she employed her great influence and favour with the Emperor to amass great sums of money, which she knew would one day do her good service.

Mæsa was a widow when she quitted Syria for Rome; she brought up her daughters in the maxims of the Court, and took care to instil into their minds the principles of her own policy. Her endeavours were not

thrown away, for we shall see in the sequel that they knew how to make the most of their mother's lessons. These princesses did not always remain at Rome; they accompanied the Empress in all Severus's journeys, who was frequently at war with barbarous nations, being desirous to signalise himself by exploits less odious than those he had performed against his fellow-citizens. His arms were generally successful, but the town of Atra in Arabia put a stop to his progress, for, after he had made inconceivable efforts to take it, he was to his disgrace obliged to raise the siege. He there had the mortification of seeing a considerable part of his army perish and his laurels withered by a turn of fortune which grieved him beyond measure.

This put him into so ill a humour that Crispus, tribune of his guards, fell a victim to his rage upon this occasion, and forfeited his life for having repeated some verses that seemed to reproach the Emperor with the blood of so many soldiers and brave officers whom he had sacrificed to his caprice and ambition, especially by his obstinacy in attempting to take Atra.

We shall not trouble ourselves to follow Severus in all his voyages and travels to the East and into Britain, but will rather examine and give an account of what took place in his own family, about which he seemed so indifferent

himself. While he, being hurried away by his ambition, was taken up in pursuing his Eastern conquests, his wife Julia was dishonouring him by her prostitutions, and his children by her debaucheries; being at last informed of this, he resolved to make their education the principal object of his care. Caracalla was then but fourteen years of age, and his brother some years younger. The Emperor took them, and their mother with them, into the East, to wean them if possible from the pleasures of Rome, and to get them out of the way of being corrupted by those insidious and dangerous flatterers who never fail to make a fatal impression upon young and tender minds. But, by the bloody executions which he carried out daily, he rather gave them lessons and examples of cruelty, which operated but too strongly upon Caracalla, who was by nature inclined to that as well as all other vices. The viciousness of his temper did not, however, appear while he was a child; on the contrary, he seemed to be very affable, good-natured, and inclined to good actions, which perhaps might have been due to his having been educated by Proculus, who professed the Christian religion, and was greatly esteemed by Severus. But flattery, pleasures, and bad examples soon got the better of Proculus's endeavours, and, notwithstanding all the care and trouble he took to inspire him with noble

inclinations, he had no other sentiments than such as were depraved and vitiated. Geta's education, on the contrary, was more powerful than nature,[1] for in his childhood he exhibited something very rude and indocile in his manner, and was much inclined to sensuality and covetousness, but all his failings vanished as he grew riper. He became humane, polite, and accomplished, free, and easy of access,[2] entertained his friends cheerfully and agreeably, the nobles with affability, and men of learning with great marks of esteem. Upon all occasions he gave proofs of his mild and gentle disposition, and when he was but ten years old he interceded with his father, as much as he possibly could, on behalf of those who had taken part with Niger and Albinus, being always inclined to commiserate the unfortunate. From the difference of temper in these two brothers proceeded that antipathy they always had to each other; one affected to blame what the other approved, and those whom Geta loved the other was sure to hate. The flatterers that were about them made it their business to nourish and promote this disagreement by their poisonous reports; for, on pretence of being devoted to the interests of these

[1] Tertullian ad. Scapulam c. 4.

[2] Herodian. lib. 4.

princes, they never ceased to animate them against each other.

Geta was the Empress's favourite, for, besides that he was the handsomer of the two, she found him much more dutiful and complaisant. She dreaded the furious and violent temper of Caracalla, and clearly saw that Geta was infinitely more beloved by the Romans than his brother. She, however, did all that lay in her power to make them live on good terms; the Emperor also took a great deal of pains with the eldest to reform him, and, as marriage has been always reckoned the best restraint against the impetuosities of youth, he formed the design of marrying him to Plautilla, daughter of Plautianus, his favourite, who was one of the mainstays of the government, during all the time that he continued in favour, and was a conspicuous example of the instability of fortune after his disgrace.

Plautianus was a native of Africa, of very obscure birth. His youth had been sullied by many crimes[1] for which he was banished his country, and he afterwards insinuated himself into the good graces of Severus by another crime, for which he deserved to have been rigorously punished.[2] He acquired such great favour

[1] Herodian. lib. 3.

[2] Ut vero alii affirmant, flore magis ætatis per stuprum conciliatus.

and influence with this Emperor, and became so powerful that the lives and fortunes of the Romans were at his disposal. Severus made him a senator, and at the same time gave him other offices that till then had been incompatible with the former dignity. He heaped riches upon him, and gave him all the opportunities he could desire of acquiring more. This encouraged him to commit horrible cruelties and acts of injustice. Fortune did in his case what she generally does in the case of those whom she raises from nothing to great honour; she made him insolent, and being quite intoxicated with his grandeur and authority, he looked upon himself as vastly superior to the rest of mankind. When he passed through the streets the great number of domestics that preceded him obliged all those they met either to turn aside or to cast their eyes downward, that they might not presume to look at him, as being unworthy of so great an honour. Never was there seen such excessive pride, for everybody prostrated themselves before this idol of the Court. Nothing was to be seen but statues of the most sumptuous materials erected in honour of him, and nobody swore but by his Fortune; public prayers were composed for his preservation and prosperity, though the people would have rejoiced if he had been annihilated, for they were never fond of excessive power, and

Plautianus's was the more detested because to him were attributed all the cruelties of Severus, who was never weary of shedding the blood of the most illustrious citizens. Thus this minister was at last as much hated as the Emperor, and more feared than he.

Though Severus was very jealous of his authority, yet he could tolerate that this insolent and overgrown favourite should assume so extraordinary a degree of power, and was so infatuated with him that he was desirous to have him for his successor;[1] so it became a common saying that the sky would fall sooner than that Severus could ever be unkind to Plautianus. Julia, for her part, could not bear that Plautianus should enjoy this monstrous and excessive power, for, accustomed as she was to treat people of the highest rank and distinction in the empire with haughtiness, it was intolerable to her to yield to one so infinitely beneath her, and to see a man who had risen from nothing dispose of everything according to his absolute will and pleasure. She did not fail to put in practice all her art to undermine him, if possible, but in vain. Plautianus—who did not love the Empress, because he knew she hated him—parried her strokes and turned them against herself, for, as he knew his own

[1] Dio. lib. 76.

strength, he undertook to accuse Julia of all her intrigues, and had the boldness to assure the Emperor that he could prove his assertion. Severus very carefully suffered his favourite to attack the Empress's honour by these accusations, and was a quiet spectator of his insolence, without endeavouring to silence him. It is not unlikely that he was very glad of Julia being thus mortified, and secretly rejoiced at her suffering from Plautianus the reproaches she so justly deserved, and which he had not courage to address to her himself. Be that as it may, Julia had the vexation to see that the Emperor sacrificed her to Plautianus's revenge, and found by experience that nothing was to be got by contending with a favourite who was so firmly rooted in the Emperor's affections. From that time she ceased to give herself any trouble about State affairs, and devoted herself solely to the study of philosophy, so that, instead of those flattering courtiers with whom she used to be surrounded, she admitted none but sophists and learned men, and passed her time in disputing with them, more for amusement and to dissipate her vexation than to display her knowledge, though few had a greater share of it. Among the philosophers who had free access to her, none was more remarkable than Philostratus. He was a professor of rhetoric, and had published a famous book entitled

"The Lives of the Sophists," which he dedicated to the Emperor Severus. Julia honoured him with her particular esteem, made him her secretary, and engaged him to write the life of Apollonius, for the Empress, having read the history of that celebrated magician which Damis, a great friend of the impostor, had composed, and not thinking it done as correctly as it should be, entreated Philostratus to undertake it.

Plautianus's triumph over Julia could not but add greatly to his pride and insolence, for, meeting with no obstacles in his way, and having undoubted proof of the absolute power he had acquired over the Emperor, he carried his views further still, and imagined there was nothing he might not attempt. Then it was that he threw off entirely the mask, and appeared in his proper colours. He gave himself up to the most infamous vices, even such as were contrary to nature; and at the same time that he indulged himself in all sorts of abominations he took it into his head to be excessively jealous of his wife, and could not endure that she should take the most innocent liberties. In his own family he was severe and tyrannical, prohibiting every diversion or amusement, and carried his ill-nature to his wife so far as not to permit her to pay the visits that courtesy required, nor so much as to speak to the Emperor or Empress.

About that time a comet happened to appear which caused great speculation, as the most trifling thing did among the superstitious heathens. People would needs have this to be a prodigy that foretold some great event, but few imagined that the ruin of Plautianus was threatened; for the Emperor himself acknowledged that he did not believe it was possible he could ever be prevailed upon to hurt him. Plautianus was not ignorant of this: he knew his own power, and made a very bad use of it; for being intoxicated with his ambition, he thought of nothing but how to raise himself still higher, and humble everybody else. The more favours the Emperor granted him, the more he asked, but he worked only for himself, and did not think it necessary to make friends. One seldom meets with generosity in upstarts of this kind, their extraction and their sentiments being generally of a piece, while everything in them shows the baseness of their origin. Plautianus, amidst all his grandeur, could not help reflecting very often upon the obscurity of his own birth, not by way of becoming more humble and modest, but in order to obliterate it by some splendid alliance. There was no lack of illustrious families in Rome, but none of them were great enough for his vanity, nor seemed fitted to carry into execution his exalted schemes. None less than members of the Imperial family

were sufficient for his purpose; for, feeding his imagination upon the most flattering and pleasing hopes, he did not doubt but his fortune would be so firmly established, if a great match of that sort could be brought about, that he would not only have nothing to apprehend in regard to his present grandeur and power, but would have opportunities of carrying out even loftier designs.

This ambitious scheme being thus decided upon, he only waited for a proper time to propose it to the Emperor, intending, as soon as he could conveniently do so, to recommend his daughter Plautilla to be married to Caracalla the Emperor's son. Severus himself furnished him with an opportunity; for, having resolved to procure a wife for his son, as we have observed, he communicated his desire to his favourite Plautianus, who did not fail to make use of all his power and interest to persuade the Emperor to approve of the above-mentioned match. The Emperor, who was unable to refuse him anything he asked, consented immediately, and informed Caracalla of this resolution.

Plautilla was very handsome,[1] but not agreeable in temper and manners; for, as pride and great fortune are generally inseparable, she had acquired a certain haughty

[1] Tristan. Comment, Histor.

air that was not at all pleasing, especially to Caracalla, who hated Plautianus, and everything belonging to him, because of his excessive power and insolent behaviour. It does not appear that Julia was consulted in this affair, but in all probability it would not have been conformable to her inclinations, for it is not reasonable to suppose that she could ever have approved of a match between her son and the daughter of her mortal enemy, who had nothing but her fortune to recommend her; while at the same time, he had all the illustrious families of the empire to choose from, and might have selected some lady to whom Plautilla could not be compared for beauty and merit.[1] Caracalla received his father's commands with a pretended obedience and respect, but with a very grave and discontented countenance, which notwithstanding did not make Severus alter his mind; thus Caracalla became Plautianus's son-in-law by marrying his daughter.[2]

These nuptials were celebrated at a happy conjuncture, for the Emperor was just returned from the East, covered with laurels which he had gathered there in his successful wars against the Parthians, and bringing with him a prodigious number of captives. His triumph and the

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[1] Dio. lib. 76.

[2] Herod. lib. 3, c. 35.

marriage of his son were a double motive for the magnificent presents that he made the Prætorians and the people. To these liberalities he added all the usual diversions, such as sports, races, and shows. The rejoicings lasted many days, and Plautianus contributed largely to their splendour and magnificence. He entertained the people with several wild beast shows, and regaled the senators with a most noble banquet; but it was not observed without the greatest indignation, that in order to give his daughter a magnificent retinue and a melodious band of musicians, he caused a great many to be made eunuchs on purpose, which was a cruelty unheard of in Rome[1]; he further chose for that purpose the children of very considerable families, and even selected some married men—a novelty that was no less a mark of his insolence than of his brutal disposition.

The new princess brought by way of dowry immense sums of money to her husband. It is asserted that there was enough of it to have married fifty Queens; it was all carried into the palace, and the people passing through the streets saw those monstrous heaps of gold and silver, which they looked upon as spoils taken from them, and the fruits of Plautianus's rapine and plunder.

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[1] Dio. lib. 76.

As for Caracalla, he did not show, amidst all these rejoicings, a satisfied and contented countenance, for, as he had been compelled to marry Plautilla quite contrary to his inclinations, he plainly discovered that his heart had not been at all consulted in the affair, and that his compliance with his father's will was extremely distasteful to him, for which reason he lived, even at first, upon a very indifferent footing with her, but this soon after degenerated into a downright aversion, by reason of her proud and haughty behaviour, as well as her peevish and restless temper. For, after she became wife to the presumptive heir to the empire, she grew daily more imperious, and claimed to govern Caracalla as his father was governed by hers. Whatever he said or did incurred her censure, for she took upon her to control all his actions and conduct, and blamed them in terms so provoking as vexed him beyond measure, for he was not naturally of a very patient disposition. These disputes,[1] reproaches, and complaints increased more and more the weight of his matrimonial chains, and consequently, his hatred of his wife. She became the most disagreeable object in his sight, and her presence so insupportable that he ordered a separate apartment for himself. In short,

[1] Herodian, lib. 3.

matters came to such a pass that, in the course of the violent and furious quarrels they had together, he often threatened that, as soon as the Emperor died, both she and her father should perish together.

This alarmed Plautilla; for, as she had had time and opportunity to study her husband, and became well acquainted with his disposition, she knew him to be a man capable of keeping his word, which furnished her with matter for very serious and melancholy reflections. The miserable condition of several of the earlier Empresses extremely agitated her mind, and filled her with frightful apprehensions. In this perplexity she went to pour out her grief and tears in the bosom of her father, to whom she communicated all her terrors and afflictions.

Thus those favourites of Fortune, who, to disguise the lowness of their extraction, purchase great alliances, only procure for their daughters intolerable slavery, and sacrifice their peace and happiness to their own restless ambition; for the man who sighs more after the dowry than the lady, has, generally speaking, nothing but contempt for his wife, as soon as he has got possession of her riches.

Caracalla's threats and treatment of Plautilla exasperated Plautianus exceedingly, but at the same time greatly alarmed him; for he considered that in all probability

the young prince would soon have it in his power to execute his intentions. He saw the danger he was in, and could think of no way to prevent it but by seizing the throne. The undertaking was difficult and hazardous, but he found it absolutely necessary, and thought it worth his while to make a bold and desperate attempt, when a throne was to be acquired and at the same time his life and treasures secured. In the meantime a thousand obstacles presented themselves to his imagination, and made him hesitate what to do on this important occasion. His enterprise was no less than that of hurling Severus from the throne, assassinating the Emperor and his children, and seizing the supreme power. To do this he must first make himself master of the palace, cut the throats of all the guards or corrupt them, have a sufficient body of troops at his command, and be well assured that the army would all this time remain quiet spectators of the whole scene. He had to form a party whose fidelity he could depend upon, and associate with him in this design people who were capable of supporting him. In a word, he had to overthrow the whole State, which in the present condition of things was no easy matter to do. In this anxiety of mind, and amidst these bitter reflections, he was so agitated between hopes and fears that he was observed to be pale and trembling,

and it was easy enough to read in his countenance the vexation of his heart ;[1] so that Plautianus was a prey to terrible alarms and the most cruel perplexities.

Just at the time when Plautianus was meditating this great stroke, Mount Vesuvius vomited an extraordinary quantity of fire, and with so much noise and roaring that it was distinctly heard at Capua. This, according to the ideas of those superstitious times, was looked upon as the forerunner of some great change, and Plautianus's ruin soon after verified this conjecture.

Geta, the Emperor's brother, being very ill, and finding himself near his end, sent for his brother, and talked to him with the freedom of a man who, having nothing more to fear, speaks his mind without artifice or disguise. He represented to him the great danger of giving Plautianus so excessive a power, which he might make use of against his benefactor ; disclosed to him all the pernicious designs and projects of that ambitious man ; told him that, in raising his favourite to such a height, he was acting quite contrary to his own interests and those of his family ; that, by the excessive honours which he had heaped upon him, he only spurred him on the more to gratify, if possible, his insatiable desire of

[1] Dio. lib. 62.

power and riches; and, in short, convinced the Emperor that, in his conduct toward that haughty minister, he had shown an unpardonable stupidity and want of discretion. Severus, who in the main was a person of good sense, found his brother's reasoning to be so much the more solid and judicious as he had himself made some serious reflections upon the too extensive authority he had suffered Plautianus to assume by degrees. He was displeased at the great number of statues which he had observed to be erected at Rome and in the provinces in honour of his favourite,[1] some of which were placed among those of the Emperor's family and nearest relations, as if he had been their equal. From that time he resolved to humble him, and show him less regard than he had hitherto done. This coldness of the Emperor had a speedy effect upon the proud and surly minister. He became somewhat more tractable, but was not at all discouraged, not doubting but he should soon find the way back to his master's affections. He looked upon this alteration in the Emperor's behaviour as due to some ill turn done him by Caracalla, who, he knew, had frequently made his grandeur, riches and authority, the subject of conversation with his father, and took every opportunity of setting the

[1] Spartian. in. Sever.

Emperor against him. Plautianus, on the other hand, strictly observed the conduct of his son-in-law, and kept a sort of register of all he did, which he reported to the Emperor, and did not fail to put the worst construction upon everything, without considering that, by endeavouring to hurt the prince, he only hastened his own destruction; for Caracalla, who was informed of all this, hated him so much the more, and laboured the more zealously to compass his ruin.

Plautianus made no question but his death was the aim of Caracalla, and the object of all his intrigues. The prince's hatred of him was too obvious to leave any room for uncertainty, and this caused him the greatest apprehension; for, whatever friendship the Emperor had hitherto shown him, he could not flatter himself with the hopes of its continuing, especially since he now no longer received those tokens of it which the Emperor had been always so lavish of with regard to him. On the contrary, he could not but look upon this change in the Emperor's behaviour as the beginning of his disgrace, and the forerunner of his misfortunes. The affliction of his daughter, together with her husband's threats, with which she had just acquainted him, greatly augmented his fears; everything, in short, gave him warning of his danger, and showed him plainly that he was on the brink

of destruction. Full of these melancholy thoughts, he considered what measures to take, and how he should avoid his impending ruin; but the means he had recourse to had an effect quite opposite to what he intended, and proved fatal to him, for, having determined to massacre the Emperor and the prince, he went to work the wrong way, and so fell a victim to his ill-concerted scheme. In order to perpetrate this horrid crime, he addressed himself to Saturninus, a centurion in the Prætorian Guards, who upon every occasion had shown a particular devotion to his interests. He sent for him one evening into his chamber, and, having caused everybody to retire, "It is now time," said he,[1] "that you should give me the strongest proof of that zeal and friendship you have always professed for me, and that you should receive such a substantial token of my gratitude as shall be proportionate to the important service I expect from your affection. It is in your power to raise me to the throne, or, rather, you have an opportunity of sharing the sovereign power with me. In labouring to advance my fortune you promote your own. It is a question of depriving Severus of the throne, and of getting rid of Caracalla, who is ready to ascend it. Do not let

[1] Herodian. lib. 3.

this proposal terrify you; the enterprise, no doubt, appears difficult, but when it is maturely considered it will be found to be not only practicable, but easy. You know that nobody is permitted to enter the Emperor's chamber but the officer of the guard, and it happens very opportunely that you are in waiting. There is no difficulty in the matter, for you have nothing to do but to make use of your privilege; you have free access to the Emperor's room, and also to that of Caracalla; you may plunge your dagger into them both without meeting with the least obstacle. I need not tell you that there is not a moment to be lost, for we can never have a better opportunity. Go directly to the palace, as if you had some affair of importance to communicate to the Emperor from me, and despatch both him and his son. This generous action will exalt you to the post I now hold, for, if you share with me the danger of this undertaking, it is but reasonable that you should divide the spoils with me. But I must at the same time inform you that of necessity you must decide upon one or other of these two things: you must either prepare to take away the Emperor's life or to lose your own; for, in short, my interest absolutely requires that I should not leave you in a condition to abuse the confidence I place in you, by revealing the important secret I have now confided to you."

This discourse filled Saturninus with horror; but as he was extremely cunning, he did not appear to hesitate a moment between his duty to Severus and the magnificent rewards that Plautianus offered him. He was convinced that, if he showed any scruples, Plautianus would think nothing of putting him to death, even by accusing him of the very crime which he refused to commit; he accordingly pretended to enter very readily into this project, begged Plautianus to give him instructions in writing, and, in order to convince him that he looked upon the affair as settled, he prostrated himself before him, and saluted him as Emperor. This afforded Plautianus infinite delight; he was rejoiced at having found a man so well fitted for his purpose, and gave him the writing he desired, without reflecting that, in case his enterprise should not succeed, he was leaving in Saturninus's hands a decisive and incontestable proof of his crime; but he was so blinded with his ambition that he did not consider the fatal consequences his imprudence might be attended with. He, therefore, immediately dismissed Saturninus, and charged him, as soon as he had massacred the Emperor and his son, to inform him without delay, that he might lose no time in seizing the palace before the Emperor's death should be known.

Matters being thus arranged, Saturninus hastened to

the palace with the order Plautianus had given him, but fully determined to make a very different use of it from what the minister intended. He sent the Emperor word that he had a secret of the greatest consequence to impart to him, and being immediately admitted into his chamber, "I am sent by Plautianus," said he, with tears in his eyes, "to kill you; but, contrary to his intentions, I come to save your life. Your favourite, having most ungratefully resolved to possess himself of your throne, has commanded me to put you and your son to death. It is probable that you would not easily be brought to believe him capable of so much perfidy, if I did not bring ample evidence to prove my assertion. By this written order you will see whether I speak truth. I pretended to accept this commission very willingly, for fear some less faithful officer should undertake it without scruple or difficulty."

The great regard that Severus always had for Plautianus pleaded very strongly in his behalf against Saturninus's accusation. He was inclined to believe that this pretended conspiracy was the effect of Caracalla's malice, who, he imagined, had a mind to ruin the favourite. He felt so convinced of this that he immediately sent for his son, and reproached him with the base artifice he had made use of to destroy one who was so useful to him, and whom he honoured with his affection. It was useless

for the prince to protest he was innocent, for the Emperor pronounced him guilty. Saturninus, seeing that the Emperor obstinately refused to be convinced, notwithstanding the proofs he had given him that it was really as he had affirmed, began to be terribly alarmed, not doubting but the storm would fall upon his own head, if he should be so unfortunate as not to convict the criminal. He then addressed the Emperor thus: "What clearer demonstration can you desire of Plautianus's treason than his own handwriting, together with his seal? But if that be not sufficient, give me leave to send one of my soldiers to Plautianus to inform him that his orders have been executed, and you will see him come immediately to take possession of the palace and throne, which must put the matter beyond all doubt or question."

It happened just as Saturninus had said. Plautianus was no sooner informed by the soldier that the business was done than, abandoning himself to the flattering hopes of reigning, he fancied he was already on the throne. He put on his armour with all possible speed under his robe, and made what haste he could to the palace, which he entered without meeting with the least resistance. As soon as Saturninus saw him, he paid him the respect due to the Emperor, and taking him by the hand, conducted him into the chamber, where, he told him,

the bodies of the two princes were weltering in their blood. The first object that presented itself to his view was the Emperor and Caracalla, both alive and well. Nothing more was necessary to show him that he was betrayed. Severus[1] reproached him with his ingratitude and the enormity of his crime in attempting the life of the benefactor who had heaped riches and honours upon him, and given him so many marks of his confidence and affection. Plautianus was at first greatly confused, but soon recovering himself he put on a bold and impudent countenance, and told the Emperor that if anybody had accused him of so black a treason it was a false and scandalous aspersion, maliciously invented to ruin him. He then went on to complain of this horrid plot, as he called it, with such an air of innocence, ingenuousness, and resolution that Severus began to be moved, and did not know what to think, but unluckily for Plautianus it was by some accident discovered that he had on his armour. Caracalla, pointing this out to the Emperor, said to his father-in-law, "What, you come to the palace at an unseasonable hour without being sent for, you wear a breastplate under your robe, and all this without any design? Do people

[1] Herodian. lib. 3.

arm themselves with so much precaution to go to supper?" And at that instant, without giving him time to answer, he took his sword from him, gave him a blow on the face, and would have killed him on the spot if the Emperor had not hindered him. The unfortunate minister was, however, soon put out of pain, for the Emperor ordered him to be killed directly in his presence.[1]

All this while the Princess Plautilla was with the Empress Julia in her apartment, not dreaming of her father's misfortune, but an officer went and informed her of it, and in the most brutal manner. Entering the chamber unceremoniously, "See here," said he, "a part of your father," at the same time throwing at her a handful of Plautianus's beard that he had plucked off his face. These words pierced her heart, for with her father she lost her only support, and was left exposed to the barbarous persecutions of a tyrannical husband, Plautianus being the only person who could check the furious and violent temper of Caracalla. She shed floods of tears, and her affliction was the more bitter as nobody took any pains to mitigate it, for the Empress, instead of endeavouring to comfort her and sympathise with her in her sorrow, gave full vent to her joy. She could not forbear

[1] Herodian. lib. 3. Dio. lib. 76.

expressing her satisfaction at the death of Plautianus, in spite of the reasons she had to conceal it, in accordance with all the rules of decency and good manners; but she had suffered too much from the insolence of that haughty favourite to dissemble the pleasure which the news of his death afforded her. Plautilla had but too much reason to dread the consequences of this tragical affair, for the prince, being no longer withheld by the fear of his father-in-law, appeared in his natural colours, and showed his brutal disposition with so little restraint that he became the terror of all the city.

His wife Plautilla was the first to experience the terrible effects of his vengeance, for, as he had only married her in pursuance of his father's commands, he was resolved to make her suffer for the constraint that had been put upon him. Sometimes he would reproach her[1] with her father's misfortune, and heap the most insulting language upon her, and at other times would assiduously look out for opportunities of mortifying and vexing her; at last he became so cruel that it was not his fault that she did not perish miserably.

Whether Severus had still some remains of compassion for the family of Plautianus whom he had so much

[1] Herodian. lib. 3.

loved, or that for decency's sake he would not quite desert Plautilla, and abandon her to her husband's ill humour and resentment, he contented himself with banishing her to the island of Lipari, together with a son she had, where these illustrious exiles lingered out a wretched life in continual apprehension of a violent and untimely end. They were not only refused the means to enable them to live in any way suitable to their rank, but were denied even common necessaries.

The death of Plautianus delivered the two princes, Caracalla and Geta, from a disagreeable spy upon their actions, but it furnished them with an unhappy opportunity of abandoning themselves to all manner of excess and debauchery; for they were now no longer in awe of that minister, who used to reprimand them without ceremony. In vain did Severus employ remonstrances and threats, for the poisonous insinuations of flatterers were greedily listened to, whilst the irksome advice of their father was held in the utmost contempt; so that these two brothers, so different in their tempers, so inveterate against each other, so divided in their opinions, and born with inclinations so opposite, agreed perfectly in everything that was bad, and joined in the same crimes.

The Emperor being no longer governed by Plautianus, undertook to reform several abuses, for which purpose

he made use of Papinianus, cousin of the Empress, and a famous advocate. He gave him very important posts, which this worthy man filled with great credit; so that upon this occasion merit was justly rewarded,—a thing which rarely occurs. Severus, at the instigation of Papinianus, made a number of salutary and judicious laws; but at the same time it must be confessed that those ordinances, so admirable in intention, became inhuman by the severity with which they were put into force; for the Emperor, being hurried away by his natural sternness, caused them to be carried out with inexorable cruelty. He prosecuted and punished robbers without the least mercy, not considering that his own insatiable avarice made him infinitely more guilty than those he put to death with so little compassion. He issued terrible edicts against adulterers (of whom, Dion says, there were a great many thousands convicted after a strict investigation), and at the same time neglected to restrain his sons, who filled Rome with their debaucheries. Those of the Empress Julia were even more scandalous; and, if the historians have not given us a special list of her crimes, they have at least said enough to convince us that she led an abominable life, and that it was not necessary to enter into details of them. Severus, however, who was so severe against women in

general, treated his own wife with an indulgence that dishonoured him. He was jealous to avenge other men in that respect; but permitted his own wife to be as unfaithful to him as she pleased, which encouraged her to continue in her immorality. Thus this Emperor, who knew so well how to rule the State,[1] was quite ignorant how to manage his own family. He was so careful in reforming the conduct of others that he neglected the behaviour of his own wife and children. He could not, for all that, plead that he was unacquainted with these things, for he was but too frequently a witness of them, especially of the implacable hatred of his sons for each other; their quarrels caused him much trouble and vexation, but he had not the secret of preventing them, nor of influencing their behaviour. He attempted this, by taking them away from Rome, where the sycophants, with whom they were surrounded, were perpetually corrupting and setting them at variance. With this view he took them with him to Britain, whither he was obliged to go to quell the barbarians, who terribly ravaged that province. The Empress Julia and her sister Maesa accompanied the Emperor on this journey. He was very successful in this war, and destroyed above fifty thousand of the

[1] Spartian. in Sever.

barbarians. He penetrated into the heart of Caledonia, and obliged the enemy to come to terms; or rather, he granted them peace upon such conditions as he thought fit.

Julia received, in Caledonia, all the honours due to her rank, as far as the rude and uncivilised inhabitants were capable of paying them; but not finding in the women of the country the politeness of the Roman ladies, she often used to rally them with a great deal of wit and vivacity, and sometimes in a very provoking manner; but the august dignity of Julia, and the respect they owed the wife of the Emperor of the world, shut their mouths, and secured the Empress, at first, against repartees that would not have been very agreeable; afterwards, however, when they came to be better acquainted with her, they gave their tongues more liberty, and did not always leave Julia the satisfaction of triumphing. One of the better sort of these women had so little regard for the Empress as to reproach her with her prostitutions with as much good sense as resolution, and Julia, who had attacked her in an offensive manner, was given to understand that, even in Caledonia, people were not ignorant of her debaucheries. Dion tells the story as follows:[1] Argentocox, a person of consideration in Caledonia, had

[1] Dion. lib. 76.

a wife who was full of wit and vivacity, and never at a loss for a repartee. She went one day to pay her respects to the Empress, and Julia, having turned the conversation upon the customs and manners of the women, rallied the lady upon their gallantries, and the little fidelity shown to their husbands. The Empress was not so innocent in that respect as to be beyond the reach of recrimination, and it is not at all politic to touch upon certain subjects that may be turned against one's self with so much advantage. It is true that the women of Caledonia were not, at that time, remarkable for chastity, but Julia, without being a Caledonian woman, had the same inclinations as they had, and gratified them in a more shameful manner.

The Empress, having pushed her raillery a little too far and accused the Caledonian ladies of being quite unmindful of the rules of decency in their amours, and of carrying on their intrigues publicly, the other replied with great firmness, "It is true that we women do not manage our love affairs quite so cunningly as the Roman ladies, but it must be owned that our not taking much pains to conceal our gallantries from our husbands is rather a mark of our sincerity than otherwise, as we do not endeavour to impose upon them; and besides, the merit of our lovers is some sort of excuse for our misconduct. You

Roman ladies," continued she, "behave with more artifice, policy, and slyness, but at the same time act with more shame, dishonour, and infamy; nor are your proceedings less scandalous for being secret, for you often prefer the vilest and most abject wretches to your illustrious husbands, and, under an appearance of modesty, you commit, unknown to your husbands, whom you dishonour and impose upon, the most abominable prostitutions." This answer quite abashed the Empress, and cured her of bantering. It is probable that the laugh was all on the side of the Caledonians (as the Romans called the people of modern Scotland), and the Empress was thus taught that she was in the wrong to reproach the Caledonian ladies with a crime for which she herself was much more to be blamed. But this was not the only mortification she met with; for the behaviour of her two sons in Britain caused her more acute vexation, especially the attempt that Caracalla made upon his father's life, which was a specimen of what he was capable of, and showed her what she had to apprehend for herself.

This wicked and unnatural prince, looking upon the Emperor as the only person that could put constraint upon him, was determined to shake off the yoke of dependence, to which he had not, for a long time past, submitted but with great impatience. He resolved to

kill his father, whose life was far too long to suit his ardent desire of reigning, and he was within a very little of successfully carrying out his design; for Severus being one day on horseback, at the head of his legions, and in the presence of the barbarian troops, Caracalla drew his sword, and was going to run his father through behind his back, if he had not been frightened at a great and sudden shout, raised by those who were also on horseback behind him. The Emperor, turning about at the noise, saw the naked sword in his son's hand, and at once guessed for what reason he had drawn it. The consternation which he saw depicted in the countenances of those who had cried out, plainly showed him the intentions of his perfidious son, which were also manifestly apparent in his looks. It is easy to guess at Severus's grief and indignation; he had, notwithstanding, presence of mind enough to conceal it in a great measure, and was so politic as to pretend that he did not think his son capable of so horrible an action; but at night, when he had retired to his chamber, and dismissed all his attendants, except Papinianus and Castor, the latter of whom was the most faithful officer he had, he sent for Caracalla, called for his sword, and placing him in the midst of them, looked at his son with an air of sorrow rather than anger, represented to him the horror of the

action he had been about to commit, of which the barbarians, as well as the Romans, were to have been witnesses. "If you have a mind to take away my life," he continued, "do so now. Here I am, loaded with years and infirmities, and not in a condition to defend myself. But if you are at present loth to wash your hands in the blood of your father, order Papinianus to assassinate me; he will execute your orders, for you will then be Emperor."[1]

This remonstrance was the only punishment that Severus inflicted upon his son, but we are informed that it caused him so much vexation that his life became a burden to him. He had even a mind to put an end to himself by eating more[2] than his stomach was able to digest. He succeeded with the help of Caracalla, who finished by treason what he had not been able to do openly. It is reported that, finding himself very ill, he caused to be read in his presence, and in that of his children, the fine discourse that Micipsa delivered to his, to persuade them to live together like good friends, and which is to be found in Sallust. He then caused the urn, into which his ashes were to be put, to be brought to

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[1] Dio. lib. 76.

[2] Herodian, lib. 3.

him, which he took in his hands and addressed these words to it: "Thou wilt soon enclose him who once thought the whole world too little for him." Then making a public and sincere acknowledgment of the frailty of this life and all its grandeur, "I have been," said he, "all that a mortal can be, and what[1] satisfaction does it afford me now?"

He died at Eboracum; and, in spite of his sordid avarice and extreme cruelty, he was so well beloved that it was said of him, as it was said of Augustus, that he ought either never to have been born or never to have died.

Julia had his body burnt with the usual ceremonies, put his ashes into a costly urn, and set out for Rome, accompanied by the Princess Maesa and her two sons; but neither the death of their father, nor the constant sight of the urn which contained his remains, nor the deep mourning of the Empress their mother, could induce them to lay aside, even for a while, the envenomed hatred and animosity they bore each other. They did nothing during the whole of the journey but dispute, quarrel, and bitterly reproach one another. Caracalla could not bear that his brother should claim any authority

[1] Spartian. in Sev.

or receive any of the honours due to the Emperor. Geta alleged, with great heat and violence, that he had a right to an equal degree of power with his elder brother, because it was always Severus's intention that it should be so, and he had declared it to be his resolution, for which reason he had ordered that the statue of Victory should be placed alternately in their chambers.[1] The Empress, who clearly foresaw the terrible consequences that these perpetual quarrels would be followed by, made use of all the persuasive remonstrances and entreaties she could think of to appease the two brothers. She also assembled all those who were most distinguished by their rank and wisdom to settle the prerogatives and privileges of the two princes, and used all possible means to pacify them. She omitted nothing, in short, to make them friends, and was in hopes she had succeeded when she had brought them to an apparent reconciliation, and they had given each other mutual tokens of affection. But we shall soon see that there was no sincerity in

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[1] The Emperors had always in their chamber the statue of Victory, which was one of the divinities for which they had the greatest respect. Nobody had this privilege but the person who was invested with the sovereign authority. Wherever the Emperor went this statue was carried along with him, and it was always placed in his chamber, or in his tent.

all this, for their hatred was only smothered, not extinguished.

Caracalla was no sooner arrived at Rome than he stained his entry with the blood of a great number of persons.[1] The physicians, who refused to put his father to death, were the first that were executed, and died martyrs to their fidelity. Castor, chamberlain to the late Emperor, Evodus, to whom this young tyrant owed his education, and many others, perished by his order. He dismissed Papinianus from his post, which he so highly honoured by his upright behaviour, and considered all those as his mortal enemies who had endeavoured to make peace between him and his brother.

Plautilla was all this while overwhelmed with grief and affliction in the Island of Lipari, where she suffered all sorts of inconveniences; thus, by the severity of her banishment, she sufficiently expiated the part she had had in her father's insolent behaviour. Besides this, she had the mortification of losing her son, who was her only comfort, and by whose means she hoped one day to see all her misfortunes brought to an end; but Caracalla was resolved not so soon to forget the uneasy moments she had cost him and the forced submission that had been extorted from him

[1] Dio. 77. Herod. lib. 4. Spartianus.

when he was compelled to marry a woman he hated, and who was the daughter of his greatest enemy. The mere thought of the annoyances heaped upon him by Plautianus and his daughter roused his fury, and he looked upon the banishment of his wife as but a slight chastisement, not at all proportionate to the affronts he had received from her; his rage and indignation demanded that she should be more rigorously punished, nor was he long before he gave himself that cruel satisfaction. He sent the instruments of his vengeance to Lipari,[1] who, with the utmost brutality, put this unfortunate princess to death, who seemed to have been exalted by her immense treasures only in order to become the sport of Fortune. Thus miserably perished Plautilla, who might have been infinitely happier in private life than she could possibly have been upon the throne. Plautius, her brother, who had been her companion in banishment, was also put to death with her. Caracalla extended his hatred not only to Plautianus but to all those that belonged to him, and avenged in the person of the children the crime of the father.

Thus Caracalla signalised the beginning of his reign in a manner which could not but alienate from him the heart and affection of everyone, and inclined them

[1] Dio. lib. 76 & 77.

towards Geta, his brother, who was better natured and of a more humane disposition; and, although each of these princes had his guards, his apartments in the palace, and his separate Court, yet Geta's friends were more numerous than his brother's, for, of those who seemed to be attached to the elder, the majority were influenced only by considerations of interest or policy, very few by inclination; this exceedingly increased Caracalla's jealousy and hatred of his brother, which he soon showed, for he was not a man to dissemble in that respect. From that time they kept upon their guard against each other's attempts; Caracalla laid snares for Geta, and was under continual apprehension of falling into those which he imagined his brother had contrived against him. They neither ate nor conversed together, but lived, in short, like declared enemies.

This inveterate hatred that existed between the two brothers made Julia very uneasy, and was a great grief to all Severus's friends, who were apprehensive that the insuperable aversion they had for each other could not but be productive of some great misfortune, and were of opinion that there was no better way to prevent it than that they should divide the empire between them. They consented to this, and after a great deal of wrangling, it was agreed that Geta should have Asia and Egypt, and

that Caracalla should have all the rest. Nothing remained but to put this project in execution; but the Empress interposed with tears, for, finding herself by this division under the cruel necessity of parting with one of her sons, she used all her endeavours to hinder the separation. In this she consulted her maternal affection more than her prudence; she did not consider that, in persuading the princes to stay at Rome and govern the empire together, she exposed them to the very misfortunes she ought, of all things, to have avoided. Her love for her children got the better of her discretion upon this occasion, for the thoughts of losing one of them affected her so, that she was no longer able to endure her affliction; she shed copious tears, and then, casting a most tender look upon the two princes: "You have at last," said she, "my dear children, hit upon the secret of dividing the earth between you; but what method will you find of dividing your mother? For how do you imagine I can ever prevail upon myself to consent that I should be deprived of one of you? Rather than it should come to that, cut me in halves,[1] and take each of you a part of me. Let it be said all over the world that, after having divided the earth and the seas,

[1] Herodian. lib. 4.

you have divided your mother also." These words were interrupted with sobs and sighs; and Julia pronounced them in so moving a voice that the two princes were at a loss how to proceed. The Empress, perceiving that her tears began to have the desired effect, approached her sons, embraced them both with all the marks of affection that Nature can inspire, and besought them in a most tender and irresistible manner, to think no more of a separation that could not fail to cost her her life.

The tears and supplications of Julia persuaded her sons to abandon their design of reigning separately, but they were not strong enough to create an affection between two persons, whose hatred to each other had taken such deep root. They continued to show their mutual animosity upon every occasion, being always at variance in their views and inclinations, and never of the same opinion in the election of magistrates and the administration of justice, to the great loss and prejudice of those concerned. At the public games, the combats of gladiators, and at all times, the people were witnesses of this scandalous breach; each of the brothers kept up, protected, and favoured a faction, and openly declared against the other; they brought matters to that pass at last that they could not endure one another, either together or at a distance; they laid snares for each other

perpetually, were not ashamed to try and bribe their cooks and domestics to poison their respective masters; and, as each was in continual dread of his brother, they had no other occupation than that of discovering or laying snares for one another. At length Caracalla, being quite weary of this work, resolved to put his brother to death, whatever it cost him; and in order to do it without risk or danger, he had recourse to the most horrible treachery that the blackest malice could invent; for, as he knew his mother desired, above all things, that they should be reconciled, he pretended he had resolved to live for the future upon good terms with his brother; he made the most solemn protestations of this to the Empress, and told her she should have the satisfaction of seeing her two sons united for ever, as far as depended upon him. He entreated her, for that purpose, to bring Geta into his chamber,[1] where she should have all the proofs that it was in his power to give of his sincere friendship for him.

As people are naturally ready to believe what they earnestly wish for, Julia, being deceived by the perfidious protestations of her eldest son, was persuaded that at last Nature had begun to operate in his

[1] Dio. lib. 67.

heart, and that he was now fully determined to behave in a different manner from before. Believing this, she therefore sent for Geta, and entreated him to come to her apartment, where his brother was minded to give him convincing tokens of a sincere reconciliation. Geta, who knew his brother well, gave no credit to this; but as it was the Empress that requested it, he thought he might venture to go to her house. Certainly the most cautious person could not have suspected such a malicious artifice; but alas! Julia's apartment, which ought to have been inviolable, became the scene of Geta's destruction, for this unfortunate prince had no sooner entered the room than the soldiers that Caracalla had concealed revealed themselves immediately with their swords drawn, and looked about for him that was to be sacrificed to their master's vengeance. At the sight of these assassins, the young prince (being in no doubt as to their design) thought he could not do better in this extremity than shelter himself as well as he could in the Empress's bosom. He threw himself into her arms, and embracing her with all his strength: "I am undone, my mother," said he; "my dear mother, save me." The Empress clung to her son, and endeavoured to protect him, even at the cost of her own life, but neither so moving a sight nor the respect due to the Empress were able to check the fury of these

murderers; they ran him through the body several times, though in the Empress's arms, so that it might be said that his blood returned to the bosom from whence it came. Julia was covered with it, and was wounded in one of her hands, either by the soldiers or by Caracalla himself, who had the barbarous cruelty to come into the chamber, and be not only a spectator of this horrid tragedy, but also a sharer in it.

It is easy to imagine Julia's grief; but what is almost incredible is that Caracalla's brutality went so far as to forbid his mother to enjoy the poor comfort her tears could afford her. Both she and the ladies who were with her were obliged to stifle their grief, for fear that Caracalla should serve them the same way. The Empress was even reduced to such an excess of misery as to be forced, notwithstanding the bitterness of her sorrow, to seem rejoiced at the death of her son, because there were spies placed about her by Caracalla to take note of everything she said, and of her every look.[1] The infamous Caracalla went directly to the camp, his hands yet reeking with the blood of his brother, to put himself, as he said, under the protection of the soldiers, where he gave them a long account of the dangerous conspiracy his brother had

[1] Dio. lib. 77.

formed against him. The next day he went to the Senate, where he endeavoured to justify himself and palliate his crime by declaring that what he had done was in his own defence, as his brother intended to have begun with him, if he had not anticipated him. He carried his dissimulation further still, for he entreated the senators to grant his brother immortality; and imagining that this pretended respect for his brother's memory might impose upon the public, he caused him to be placed among the gods, not grudging him a place in Heaven, provided he was no longer troubled[1] with him upon earth.

Whilst Caracalla was seeking excuses for this horrid assassination, Julia, now enjoying a little freedom, gave free vent to her tears, which had been restrained by the dread of his furious temper. She deplored the misfortune of her son, whom she had lost in so dreadful a manner, and who had met with his death in the very arms of her who had given him life. Her sister, her nieces, and the other ladies also greatly lamented the death of Geta, and sympathised with her in her grief, but their compassion nearly proved fatal to them; for Caracalla, happening to go into his mother's chamber just at the time when they were bewailing the death of the poor

[1] Spart. in Get.

prince, was within a very little of having them massacred instantly, and of mingling their blood with their tears, which he looked upon as his accusers. If Lucilla, daughter of Marcus Aurelius (a princess whose age, birth, and rank had procured her the greatest respect from all the Emperors that had reigned since her father), escaped his rage for the moment, it was only in order to expiate soon after, by her death, the crime she had been guilty of in pitying Geta. For Caracalla, finding there was no danger of anybody revenging the death of his brother, fell like a fury upon all those that had served and loved him. Afterwards, his relation, Pompeianus, grandson of Marcus Aurelius, and a great number of illustrious persons who had laboured to preserve peace and union between the two brothers, were put to death for having zealously endeavoured to unite them. Helvius Pertinax, son of the Emperor of that name, who was the darling of the Romans, forfeited his life for having made this fratricide of Caracalla's the subject of his wit. Papinianus, the pride of the empire and the greatest upholder of the laws,[1] was executed for refusing to justify this murder, for the tyrant insisted on this excellent man making a speech in the Senate to prove

[1] Spartian. in Caracal.

that Caracalla was in the right when he killed his brother, as if it was as easy to excuse that horrid action as it was for him to commit it. Foolish man, that he did not consider that Papinianus's extraordinary merit would only make this abominable affair more talked of, and that the efforts he himself made to justify it convinced people more and more of its enormity!

All these bloody executions threw Julia into terrible fright and alarm, for nothing could possibly give her greater reason to fear for her own life than the dismal end of Geta, who had died by the hand of his unnatural brother. In the meantime, whether Caracalla had a mind to appease his mother's grief and merit her pardon, or whether he thought her useful to him, he gave her great authority, and behaved to her with great respect. He ordered that all the honours due to her rank and dignity should be paid her, which was a great consolation to the Empress in the midst of all her misfortunes. He trusted her with the management of several important duties, especially that of answering the petitions and memorials that were presented to the Emperor; he granted the privilege of Roman citizens to the town of Emesa, where Julia was born; he gave the rhetorical chair of Athens to Philiscus the Sophist at her request, in opposition to the solicitations of the greatest persons in

his Court, who interested themselves for other rhetoricians; in short, he showed great consideration for her. All these favours and marks of kindness were not, however, capable of entirely consoling her, for she was overwhelmed with the sad remembrance of her son Geta, whom she had always loved much more than his brother.

I am not ignorant that some authors have accused Julia of having purchased these honours from Caracalla at the expense of her own, that she lived with him in an incestuous intimacy, and that she even married him. It is reported that, as Julia was yet beautiful (more so than many younger ladies who were reckoned handsome), when she was one day with the Emperor in an exceedingly magnificent and becoming dress, he was so smitten with her charms that, looking very amorously on his mother, he sighed, and said, "Indeed I should be very glad, if it were permitted me." Julia, who had only called all her charms to her assistance with a view to inflame her son, being rejoiced at her conquest, answered, "That it was his own fault if he denied himself anything he had a mind for. Are you not," said she, "absolute lord and master ?[1] Is it not you who give laws to all the world without being accountable to anybody for your actions ? Have you not

[1] Spartian. in Caracal.

a right to do what you please, without being exposed to censure like other people?" Julia's reply soon removed all obstacles; he married his father's widow, and added this unnatural crime to all the rest. This is what Spartianus tells us, but the generality of authors deny this marriage. Be that as it may, all historians agree in this, that Caracalla, having no colleague to be apprehensive of nor rival to fear, gave free scope to the cruelty of his nature, which he exercised upon people of all ages and conditions. Nothing was to be seen in Rome but tragical and bloody executions. His barbarity caused him to accuse innocent men of horrid crimes, and his desire of money made him oblige them to buy their freedom dearly. He ruined the senators by the extravagant expenses that he compelled them to meet. He recklessly squandered the funds that Severus, his father, left him, upon his flatterers and the soldiers, to ingratiate himself with them and secure their commendation; he was, in short, guilty of all the crimes that might have been expected from a prince who had sullied the beginning of his reign with execrable murders.

Julia had too much good sense not to foresee the bad consequences of this management; she represented to him that these vain and excessive expenses could not fail to ruin him; that it might, indeed, be consistent with good policy to ingratiate himself with the soldiers, but

that there was no necessity for enriching them; that, since he had exhausted all the means of getting money that could possibly be thought of, by such exorbitant taxes and oppressions that all the provinces were ready to mutiny, she did not see what further methods he could have recourse to.

The Emperor looked upon these wise remonstrances as the timid ideas of a woman who was apt to carry her apprehensions too far; for, in order to convince his mother that, notwithstanding his extravagance, as she called it, he had resources that she knew nothing of, he shewed her his sword, pronouncing at the same time these words, which paint in lively colours the character of a true tyrant: "Let not my expenses cause you any anxiety, for, as long as this remains, we shall not want money." This was the fatal method he put in practice at the expense of many a life; but this sword, dreadful as it was to multitudes of people, could not furnish him with money as often as he had occasion for it. He was soon so reduced[1] as to be forced to coin false money, pieces of lead plated over with silver, or of copper gilt.

This prince's foolish prodigality was not the only vice the Empress endeavoured to cure him of; there was no sort

[1] Dio. lib. 77.

of excess she was not necessitated to remonstrate against, for never had a man such depraved inclinations; so that it may be said all his actions were crimes. He continually took part in the combats in the circus, degrading his dignity with the low amusements of driving chariots, killing wild beasts, and fighting with gladiators—unworthy occupations, that procured him the nickname of Tarantus, who was a little, ill-made, crooked, contemptible gladiator. He caused all those governors of provinces who had been intimate with his brother Geta to be put to death. Even the Vestal Virgins were not exempt from his persecutions; he caused several of them to be buried alive because he found them too virtuous, and as many as had the resolution to despise his solicitations and threats, died martyrs to their chastity, and underwent the punishment which by the laws they were liable to for the contrary.[1] He filled with blood and tears all the provinces he visited, and cruelly massacred the inhabitants of Alexandria, by way of revenge for their having spoken some disrespectful words of him,[2] and feasted his eyes

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[1] Herodian. lib. 4.

[2] The inhabitants of Alexandria were accustomed to allow themselves great liberties, and to be very free with the characters of princes; some of them had acted thus in regard to Julia, nor had the Emperor escaped their licentious tongues. He was informed of it, and was

with the cruel pleasure of seeing the execution. He deceived the King of Parthia by a most treacherous and perfidious action; for, pretending to enter into a close alliance with him, he sent him a magnificent embassy and sumptuous presents, accompanied by a letter desiring his daughter in marriage.

Though the Parthian thought of nothing less than the Emperor's using any artifice or deceit, but took it for granted that he was sincere, he yet excused himself, upon account, as he said, of the great difference there was between the two nations in point of customs, manners and language, while thanking Caracalla for the honour he proposed to him.

The Emperor redoubled his entreaties, pretended he could not live without the Parthian princess, sent other ambassadors to Artabanes, her father, and more costly presents, and promised him eternal friendship, confirming it with horrid oaths and imprecations. The barbarian King, being deceived by these artful promises, yielded to the Emperor's importunate solicitations, and convoked the princes and great lords of his Court to go

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so provoked that he adopted a cruel method of being revenged; for going thither afterwards, he caused all the youth of the town to be assembled in a large square, on pretence of having a mind to form them into a phalanx, in imitation of Alexander the Great, and then put them all to the sword.

with him to meet the Emperor, while the subtle and crafty Caracalla entered the Parthian dominions as far as Ctesiphon, the metropolis. He was received in all the towns through which he passed with the greatest acclamations. The inhabitants, to do him the more honour, burnt vast quantities of rich perfumes upon altars adorned with flowers, according to the fashion of the country, and Caracalla returned his thanks and acknowledgments for these extraordinary marks of their respect and esteem, making to all appearance the sincerest protestations of friendship and gratitude.

Artabanes, attended by all his Court, received the Emperor in a vast plain near the capital with concerts of instrumental music and singing, with which an infinite number of people, who accompanied their King, made the air echo. This interview of the two monarchs took place with mutual assurances of esteem, friendship, and fidelity. Refreshments were provided in abundance for the Roman and Parthian armies; the latter, having great curiosity to see the Emperor, quitted their ranks and pressed as close upon one another as if Caracalla had been made in a different form from other men. The Emperor, seeing a favourable opportunity to execute the perfidious design that he meditated, gave the signal that had been agreed upon, and that instant the Romans fell, sword in hand,

upon the Parthians, who dreamed of no such thing, but thought they were only come to a wedding, and had no other arms than their musical instruments. The slaughter was terrible. Artabanes had the good fortune to escape on horseback, though with great difficulty, and after Caracalla had given his soldiers[1] all that the Parthians had been forced to abandon, that they might be the better able to save themselves by flight, he returned into Mesopotamia, sacking, pillaging, and burning everything that came in his way, and leaving behind him dismal tokens of his march.

Caracalla was as proud of this odious and perfidious action as if he had gained the most important victory in the world. He insolently informed the Senate by letter that he had conquered the Parthians and subdued the East. The poor-spirited and timid Senate, who knew the truth of the matter, were not ashamed to applaud him. They gave him the surname of Parthicus, decreed him a triumph and the same honours that the greatest hero was ever entitled to, which this base Emperor received as no more than what was due to him. He called these rapines and plunderings his military occupations, and it was for fear they should be interrupted that he left the

[1] Herodian. lib. 4.

administration of affairs to his mother. She was then at Antioch, and had with her her sister Maesa, to whom Caracalla had given the title of August, and who lived in great state and splendour. The Empress's two nieces, Soemias and Mamea, also continued with their mother during their widowhood. Mamea was married again to Julianus, a person much inferior to Marcianus, her first husband, but Caracalla let her enjoy the same rank and the same honours she had in Marcianus's lifetime, and which were continued to her as long as Julianus lived, but his death happened soon after.

All these princesses were extremely concerned at Caracalla's foolish and impious proceedings, whereby he exposed himself to the ridicule as well as the hatred of all the world. He ran about from town to town and was never to be seen but in the circuses and amphitheatres, among the gladiators and that sort of low, contemptible company.

The Empress and Maesa her sister saw him, with great grief, give himself up entirely to those unworthy occupations that made him so much despised, and lamented bitterly on account of his cruelties, for which he was so odious. They were justly apprehensive that it could not be long before the fate of those tyrants whom he imitated

would overtake him, and the event soon after justified their fears.[1] Julia, who received all the letters that were written to the Emperor, and which came by way of Antioch, having one day opened a packet that came from Rome, found among the rest one from Flavius Maternianus, governor of the city, to Caracalla, informing him that a soothsayer, who came from Africa, had affirmed that Macrinus would soon reign, and giving him warning to be upon his guard. This news alarmed the Empress, who gave her son speedy notice of it, but all her diligence was in vain, for the report of this prediction having spread over Africa, other letters arrived with several particulars and circumstances connected with this prediction. The Emperor was very busy driving a chariot when these letters were delivered to him, and being resolved not to interrupt his noble exercises, gave them to Macrinus to read, with orders to report the contents. Macrinus immediately read the information that was given to the Emperor about what the astrologer had foretold, and did not doubt but it would be at the expense of his life that they would endeavour to make the soothsayer a liar, if he did not prevent it without loss of time. He thought it much better to verify the prediction by

[1] Dio. lib. 78.

killing the Emperor, against whom he had also a particular grudge on account of some provoking language he had lately used towards him. Thus, being prompted by his resentment, his ambition, and especially the great danger he was in, he corrupted two tribunes of the guards, and Martialis, another of the officers, who were all exasperated at the Emperor's treatment of them, and encouraging them to be revenged of the affronts they had received, prevailed upon them to be the Emperor's executioners.

Caracalla had a great many presages of the misfortune that threatened him; his father's ghost appeared to him with a naked sword in his hand, and said to him, in a most frightful voice: "As thou didst kill thy brother so I will kill thee," and the spirit of Commodus, that he had invoked with horrible enchantments, foretold him a tragical death, by saying to him: "Begone to the punishment that is prepared for thee." But this Emperor had no need of any other presage o his miserable end than his own tormenting fears and reflections. In the meantime he persisted in his abominations and debaucheries, without troubling himself with futurity. An Egyptian, named Serapion, having had the boldness to tell him he would die soon, and that Macrinus would succeed him, Caracalla put him to death, instead of amending his ways in consequence of this important warning.

Macrinus, finding that the Emperor had information from all parts that his fatal hour drew near, and that it was in everybody's mouth that he himself was to be the author of his death, resolved to defer no longer the accomplishment of his design, and Caracalla furnished him with an opportunity for it. The Emperor, being told that the Parthians, extremely resenting his cruel usage of them, had raised a formidable army to be revenged, thought it high time to make preparations against them, but before he left Mesopotamia he resolved to go to Carrhæ, to visit the Temple of Luna, and offer sacrifices. He left Edessa, attended only by a few domestics and the officers of his guard, amongst whom were the conspirators; and as they had a right by virtue of their office to be near his person, they had an opportunity of assassinating the Emperor without meeting with any obstacle. In fact, as they were upon the road, Caracalla having occasion to alight from his horse, went a little aside by himself. Martialis, who waited only for the favourable moment, ran to the Emperor as if he had been called, and just as the Emperor turned himself about,[1] gave him a stab with his poniard which laid him dead upon the spot.

[1] Dio. lib. 78. Spartian. Herodian. Lib. 4.

The murderer had presence of mind enough to join the rest of the company as if nothing had happened, but was so imprudent as to hold the bloody dagger still in his hand, which was a sufficient proof of his crime; for if he had thrown it away nobody would have known who had done it; but a scythian of the guards, seeing him with the poniard, shot him through the body with an arrow. The news of the Emperor's death was soon published in the army; the soldiers, who had been always very fond of him, because of the liberty he allowed them, ran to Carrhæ to see his body, and Macrinus, who was the author of this tragedy, went thither also, affecting to be much afflicted, but in reality very joyful; and, the better to avert from himself all suspicion, he pretended to weep bitterly. This artificial grief concealed his treason for some time, and the more because, with much seeming respect and piety, he caused the body to be burnt with great magnificence, put the ashes into a costly urn, and sent them to Julia.

The Empress was already informed of her son's tragical death, and at the same time, that Macrinus was the author of it. Never was there seen so much affliction, for Julia, giving herself up entirely to her grief, filled Antioch with her cries and lamentations, dashing her head against the wall, and giving herself such blows upon the stomach that the cancer she had in one of her breasts

was exceedingly inflamed; she tore her clothes, and refused to take any nourishment, on purpose to starve herself. Afterwards, to indulge her rage, she poured forth all the insulting language and invectives against Macrinus that her despair could dictate, in hopes that her son's murderer would also be provoked to become hers.

People were surprised to see Julia shed such floods of tears upon this occasion, and thought her son's crimes would furnish her with reasons sufficient for consolation, especially since it had been all along observed that she never had any great or real affection for him. The politicians and those who pretended to be so thoroughly acquainted with the Empress were of opinion that she did not so much bewail the loss of her son as that of the authority she had till then exercised with so much pomp and splendour, and which was now to vanish into nothing; and certainly her future conduct justified these suspicions. For Macrinus, who had made himself Emperor by his intrigues, not thinking it proper at first to make any changes, that he might not be supposed to have had any hand in Caracalla's death, wrote Julia a letter full of expressions of esteem and respect, entreated her to make no alterations in her household, domestics, guards, or officers, and let her enjoy all the prerogatives and honours that she had been entitled to in the reigns of Severus and Caracalla.

These flattering and courteous offers wonderfully mitigated the Empress's affliction and sweetened her sorrows. She no longer endeavoured to shorten her days. She was so sensible of Macrinus's courtesy and politeness that she would gladly have recalled all that which, in her first transports of grief and indignation, she had said against him. But unluckily, all her shocking and insulting expressions had been taken notice of, and carefully collected by those parasites who made it their business to report them to the Emperor, and so aggravated them in the telling that he was mightily exasperated. He was told that this princess, being accustomed to rule, would never endure to see herself reduced to the condition of a private person; and that, after having held the reins of the government under her husband and her son, she would not fail to carry on intrigues, and endeavour by underhand means to establish her power.

Macrinus knew Julia to be a woman of skill and courage enough to form such designs. The acquaintance she had in Antioch, and the cabals she was capable of entering into against an Emperor who was not very firmly settled on his throne, made her no contemptible foe. In short, he forgot all the civil and polite letters he had written to her, and commanded her to quit Antioch. This order was the death blow of her hopes, and put an

end to all her schemes; but, as she was determined not to yield to her misfortune till she had tried everything that might prevent it, she resolved to go to Rome, where she flattered herself that it would not be impossible for her to form a party that might espouse her cause and enter into her views. This resolution was abandoned as soon as entertained. She considered that the memory of Caracalla was too odious to give her any hopes of success. It was not very probable that the Romans would be so zealous in the cause of the mother of a tyrant, who had treated them with so much inhumanity, as to take up arms in her behalf; thus, seeing no remedy for her misfortune, and besides, being grievously tormented with her cancer, she killed herself by a voluntary abstinence from food.

Thus perished the celebrated Julia, who had undergone such a variety of fortunes. For if, as a heathen observes,[1] she was raised up to the highest pitch of grandeur, so, on the other hand, it was accompanied by so many misfortunes, cares and anxieties, that she may be reckoned one of the most unhappy princesses that ever existed.

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[1] Dio. lib. 78.

THE ROMAN EMPRESSES.

THERE never was a man yet who could find out the secret of entailing prosperity upon his family. The same age, generally speaking, sees its own work fall to nothing: frequently the son or grandson of opulent parents falls into misery and poverty, and passes from honour to obscurity with as rapid a course as the great-grandfather leaped from rags to riches. Fortune makes a jest of human hopes and projects, and takes pleasure in frustrating all our plans. Even those things we most admire are built upon such precarious and slight foundations that they are not to be reckoned upon at all; for the very props upon which they depend are often the occasion of their fall.

Plautianus raised himself to that prodigious height of grandeur that, if he had had the least degree of moderation, there was nothing left for him to desire; but that virtue is seldom to be met with in such persons as blind Fortune has drawn from the dirt, and exalted to a state of honour infinitely beyond their merit and expectation. That insolent favourite, who made such bad use of his influence and riches, was in hopes they would protect him

from the changes and vicissitudes of Fortune; and this was the motive that induced him so earnestly to desire that his daughter should be married to Caracalla, in order to firmly establish himself by a great and glorious alliance; but that was just what ruined him. Caracalla, indeed, never loved Plautianus, but by being his son-in-law he became his mortal enemy. The uneasy constraint, or rather the bitter vexation, in which he lived from the time that his father compelled him to marry Plautilla inspired him with the strongest desire to be revenged, which he was so little able to conceal that he could not hinder himself from openly declaring to his wife that as soon as Severus should die the cruellest effects of his indignation should fall upon both her and her father.

These threats could not but terribly alarm Plautianus, knowing, as he did, Caracalla's violent temper; for he could easily judge what he was to expect from a furious young prince who was extremely provoked with him. This made such an impression upon his mind, and caused him so much concern, that he could find no remedy for it but that of anticipating him by taking away his life and usurping the throne. At first this undertaking seemed so difficult and hazardous that he abandoned all thoughts of it, but afterwards he considered that, whatever danger it was attended with, it was necessary; and therefore he

set about it in good earnest. While he continued in these tormenting agitations, floating between hope and fear he was pale and trembling. Thus we see that, even when Fortune seems to smile most, we are secretly tormented by care, sorrow, and perplexity.

NONIA CELSA,

WIFE OF MACRINUS.

Nothing recommends a woman so much as beauty, but virtue is the most precious ornament of it; and happy are those whose whole behaviour is influenced by prudence and discretion. A certain poet is of opinion that the number of those is but small; but, whatever that satirist has been pleased to assert, beauty and modesty are not incompatible; and, without going any further for examples than such as the history of the Empresses has furnished us with, we have observed that Calpurnia, Agrippina, wife of Germanicus, Octavia, Sabina, and many others, joined the most consummate prudence and virtue to the charms of their persons, and were not at all the less chaste for being handsome. It cannot be denied that multitudes of women have made a very bad use of their beauty. A great many instances of this have been already given in the course of this history, and the Empress Celsa is going to afford a fresh proof of it.

She was daughter of Diadumenus, whose family is not much known, but who was probably related to two great men of that name, remarkable for their skill in the law, and for their good qualities. The Empress of whom we are now to treat did not inherit their virtue; she was of a very amorous temperament, and a great lover of pleasures. She willingly permitted a crowd of admirers to entertain her with their passion, and listened to them with that sort of complaisance which is a sure sign of the progress such flattering discourses make in the heart of the person to whom they are addressed; so that what at first was only an agreeable amusement, in a little time became a commerce of gallantry that exposed her very much to the censures of the public, for which the irregularity of her conduct gave but too much reason; for she proceeded from one degree of libertinism to another, till at last she had not the least shadow of modesty left; so true it is that when a woman has once broken the ice, and transgressed the rules of decency, there is nothing so bad but that she is capable of it.

Of all Celsa's lovers, Macrinus had perhaps the least reason to hope for success. He was a Moor by birth, of a very obscure family, and possessed none of those good qualities that could make amends for the meanness of his extraction, and other imperfections; on the contrary, he

was disagreeable in his person, for his head was bald, his nose turned up; he was of a coarse and clumsy build, of very poor natural parts, ill-natured and cruel, and there was something in his countenance that was coarse, and not at all pleasing. Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, Celsa did not disdain to give him a favourable hearing, and even the strongest proof of his not being indifferent to her. Celsa was one of those women who stand in need of a husband for a screen, and to patch up their broken reputations. She could not hope to find one among those to whom she had been very liberal of her favours; successful gallants are generally least of all desirous to be husbands; it was reserved for Macrinus to marry the mistress of all his rivals.

Celsa's marriage to Macrinus did not put a stop to her dissolute behaviour; on the contrary, it only served to furnish her with more opportunities of indulging her passions. Macrinus, as we have observed, was not amiable enough to defend his wife's heart against the importunate attacks of innumerable polite and genteel lovers who paid their court to her with great assiduity, and the vicious habits she had contracted were too strong to be influenced by the rules and punctilios of decency. She therefore denied herself none of those pleasures which are prohibited

by marriage, but gave herself up entirely to the bent of her inclinations without the least reserve or restraint, so that her gallantries and debaucheries became the subject of everybody's discourse. Verses were composed and very assiduously circulated, for fear anyone should remain ignorant of her prostitutions; but Celsa, who was past all blushing, carried it off with an amazing impudence, and was the one person who was the least put out of countenance upon that score; for, having hardened herself against all that could be said to her disadvantage, and fearing neither the tongues nor pens of critics, she added to the number of her lovers[1] by making the first advances herself.

Favours that were so cheap one might imagine were not valuable enough to procure her gallants much above the ordinary stamp; she, however, made an illustrious conquest, and that was the Emperor Severus, who was so captivated as to become one of them. Riches and honours entered with this prince into the habitation of Macrinus, so that her other lovers vanished. Severus was never weary of heaping benefits upon Celsa's husband. This upstart, who till then had been forced to get a livelihood by mean occupations, was all on a sudden raised to

[1] Capitolin. in Macrin.

the highest offices; and in a few days gained more by his wife's talents than he had been able to do in his whole life by his industry. The public, who are not easily imposed upon, took it in this sense, and did not fail to attribute the favours the Emperor bestowed upon Macrinus[1] to those which he received from Celsa. It has been always observed that none are so likely to make great and rapid fortunes as those whose wives are beautiful and complaisant enough to oblige princes. Macrinus, who had been a notary, and had even been forced to appear in the amphitheatre among the gladiators, was, by the influence and interest of Celsa, put upon a level with the greatest persons in the empire; and his wife's having found the secret of subduing the Emperor's heart was more advantageous to her husband than if he had defeated all the enemies of the State. Thus monarchs who are slaves to their passions frequently confer upon the base and unworthy instruments of their vices those honours and preferments that ought only to be the rewards of true merit and of worthy actions.

Just about the time that Macrinus was coming into favour at Court, Celsa was brought to bed of a son, whom she named Diadumenus, because he came into the world

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[1] Tristan. Comment. Histor. Capitolin.

with a sort of string bound round his forehead, something in the shape of a diadem. Those who were sent for to draw his horoscope did not fail to make the most flattering predictions upon this happy circumstance. They promised Celsa that her husband would be Emperor, that the child ought to be looked upon as the son of a person who was one day to be invested with the sovereign authority, adding that he himself would, in due time, be exalted to that supreme dignity.

The death of Severus made no alteration in Macrinus's fortune; for Caracalla, who was entirely governed by his odd humours and caprices, added new favours to those which his father had so profusely lavished upon Celsa's husband, and honoured him with one of the highest and most important posts in the empire, for which unworthy choice, as we have observed, he paid very dear; for Macrinus was not ashamed to become the assassin of his benefactor. He committed that crime[1] with so much precaution that at first nobody suspected him; and when Audentius, who, as well as Macrinus, was præfect of the Prætorian Guards, had refused the empire on account of his great age, the army, upon a report that the Parthians were approaching, elected Macrinus with a

[1] Herodian. Spartian.

great deal of precipitation, thinking him the fittest person to stop the barbarians, who, they believed, were ready to fall upon them. In fact, Artabanes, highly exasperated at the perfidious behaviour of Caracalla, put himself at the head of a very powerful army, and set out in all haste to attack the Romans, who, on their side, prepared to defend themselves. Two or three battles were fought, in which vast numbers were destroyed on both sides. The Parthians claimed the honour of the victory, and celebrated it with great rejoicings. They lost, however, as many men as the Romans, who ridiculed the barbarians for priding themselves upon their imaginary victory. Macrinus, in the meantime, who was neither general nor soldier, and was very impatient to get his election confirmed by the Senate, did not disdain to treat with Artabanes. He sent him ambassadors, who asked him if he had well considered against whom he had fitted out such an army?—that if he only desired to be revenged on Caracalla, he might rest contented, since that base and unworthy Emperor had already met with his just deserts for that horrid treachery, in which nobody was concerned but himself. That Macrinus, who was elected Emperor, had nothing so much at heart as to be upon good terms with the Parthians, and to observe religiously the treaty of peace that Caracalla had violated; that he

offered to restore to him all the spoils that the Romans had taken from the Parthians, and also the prisoners; and, to give him a proof of the desire he had to repair, as much as in him lay, the affront that Caracalla had put upon him, he would make him a present of a great sum of money. Artabanes, who had no personal pique against anybody but Caracalla, accepted these proposals and retired.

Macrinus was no sooner elected than the troops felt aggrieved on account of their not having upon the throne one of Antoninus's family, and their discontent was shown by a deep silence throughout the whole army. Macrinus's friends, being apprehensive that they would choose some person related to Antoninus (for there were several of them among the officers), advised Macrinus to give his son Diadumenus the name of Antoninus, in order to ingratiate him with the legions; and Macrinus, knowing how dear that name was to the army, gave it to his son, and made him his colleague in the empire.

The news of Caracalla's death having been brought to Rome, the citizens, by their countenances, expressed their satisfaction at being delivered from the cruel oppressions of that tyrant. Macrinus's election was not indeed what they desired, for they could not perceive in this new Emperor either birth or merit; but, after Caracalla, they

did not think it possible they could fall into worse hands. This was what the senators repeated many a time, with transports of joy, when Macrinus informed them that the legions had made choice of him to supply the place of Caracalla. The Senate (now quite stripped of their liberties) approved this election, decreed to Macrinus all the honours and titles that were now inseparable from the sovereign authority, and confirmed to Diadumenus the surname of Antoninus.

If in Macrinus Rome had an Emperor without merit, in Celsa they had an Empress without modesty—her prostitutions were known to everybody. It was, however, to her that all the orders of the city went in the most respectful manner to pay their homage.

The Senate, more flattering again than the people, exhausted their whole stock of adulation, declared her August, and honoured with the most pompous titles a woman whom her scandalous debaucheries had covered with infamy.

Macrinus lost no time in acquainting his wife with his exaltation to the throne, and the honour the legions had conferred upon their son, in giving him the name of Antoninus. It appears from the letter he wrote her upon this occasion that the Romans had a greater veneration for the above-mentioned name than for that of their gods,

and that their infatuation for it even amounted to impiety, for which reason Macrinus protests to Celsa that he held himself less obliged to them for the empire than for the surname of Antoninus, which they had given his son. His words are as follows:—"I have just now received a most valuable present; you will, no doubt, imagine I am going to speak of the empire that the legions have honoured me with, but it is far beyond it, for the throne has frequently been bestowed upon very unworthy men. Know, then, that you are become mother to Antoninus, and they have given me an Antoninus for a son: what a piece of good fortune for you and for me! what glory to our family! what a presage of happiness to my empire! May the gods grant, and especially the celestial Juno, whom you revere so religiously, that I be found worthy of being father to Antoninus, and that in our son his virtues as well as his name may revive."

It was not only Diadumenus who borrowed a name, for Macrinus changed his own for that of Severus. Happy would it have been for him if, when he mounted the throne, he had abandoned his vices altogether with his name, but it is not so easy a matter for a man to leave off bad habits; greater efforts are necessary for that than Macrinus was capable of. It is true that, in

order to ingratiate himself with the Romans, he made very good regulations, and among others, inflicted heavy penalties upon adulterers, certainly not considering how many people his wife would render liable to them. He punished false accusers with death, which severity stifled, as it were, the infectious breath of those serpents who cost so many people their lives. He made a great many other useful ordinances, but he caused them to be executed with such rigour as more than counterbalanced the usefulness of them, and alienated from him the people's affections; these laws were rather looked upon as the effect of his cruelty and ill-nature, than of any desire he had to prevent vice and promote virtue.

Diadumenus, at an age that ought to be distinguished by nothing but mildness and sweetness of temper, gave marked signs of the opposite qualities; for Macrinus, after having put to death the chiefs of a conspiracy that was formed against him in Asia, was inclined to pardon those that were least guilty, but his son blamed his clemency, and complained of it to his mother. She was then at Rome indulging her vicious appetites, whilst her husband and her son were making the East tremble with their violence. She there received her son's letter, in which he gave a specimen of what he was capable of. "It appears," says he, "that the

Emperor is unmindful of your interest and his own, since he can so easily prevail upon himself to forgive. You ought to make use of the power you have over him to persuade him to punish Arabianus, Tuscus, and Gellius, whom he has pardoned; for by putting them to death he will effectually hinder them from doing us any further harm." Diadumenus did not stop there; he wrote to his father to the same effect, and omitted nothing he could think of to rouse him to revenge. These letters became public, and they gave everybody a very bad impression of a prince who could give such early signs of inhumanity. Macrinus, however, did not stand in need of his son's exhortations to cruelty; he daily gave but too evident proofs of it, by treating the soldiers with extreme rigour, and suffering them to want even common necessaries, while he was wallowing in luxury and pleasures at Antioch. He was dreaded on account of his severity, and hated for his effeminacy.

People could not endure the brutal haughtiness which he affected, and which was so far from causing the obscurity of his birth to be forgotten that it only served to put everybody in mind of it. But what most disposed the legions to revolt was their discovery that he was the murderer of Caracalla, whose name and memory were very dear to them. It was then that they heartily repented having raised to the empire that infamous assassin,

and determined to place Antoninus Heliogabalus, who was nearly related, and perhaps was son to Caracalla, upon the throne.

This young prince was extraordinarily handsome. He was then at Emesa with Mæsa, his grandmother, who, after the death of her sister, the Empress Julia, had been ordered to quit Antioch, where she lived in such magnificence as aroused the jealousy of Macrinus. She retired then to Emesa, the place of her birth, with her daughters, Soemias and Mamea, and thither she conveyed the immense riches which she had amassed during the reigns of Severus, her brother-in-law, and Caracalla, her nephew. Her two daughters were widows, and had each of them a son. That of Soemias was named Avitus Bassianus, and was afterwards known by the name of Heliogabalus; Mamea's son was called Alexianus, who, some time after, took the name of Alexander. Mæsa educated them very carefully, and dedicated them to the Sun, which the inhabitants of Emesa adored by the name of Elagabalus. She even made them priests of that divinity, to which the neighbouring nations, kings, and satraps rendered superstitious worship, and sent magnificent presents. Bassianus, who was older than his cousin Alexianus, exercised the office of the priesthood. He appeared in a purple habit, spotted with gold, wearing a sort of diadem,

or tiara, adorned with jewels, whose lustre set off the majesty of his countenance, which was the admiration of everybody, especially the Roman soldiers who were encamped near Emesa, and who often went into the temple to be present at the sacrifices of Heliogabalus, whom they saw perform the office of pontiff with extraordinary pomp, and in a most graceful manner. But what made this young prince so dear to the troops was the report that Mæsa[1] gave out that he was the son of Caracalla, which perhaps was true enough. Her emissaries industriously spread this rumour, and said that Caracalla, having fallen desperately in love with his cousin Soemias when she was at Court, had had a son by her, and that this was Heliogabalus, whom Macrinus had deprived of the empire, which was his right. Mæsa, on her side, very cunningly persuaded the soldiers to believe whatever she pleased, by making them great presents, and promising them very considerable rewards if they would defend the son of Caracalla against the snares and designs of Macrinus. Eutychianus and Gannys, Mæsa's freedmen, made the most of this favourable disposition of the legions, who listened very attentively to all these words. They told them that they ought to prefer the son of Caracalla, who had loved

[1] Capitolin. in Macrin. Lamprid. in Diadumen.

them so entirely, to Macrinus, the man of yesterday, the murderer of their Emperor, equally incapable and unworthy of governing the empire. That, after all, their own interests required that they should place Heliogabalus upon the throne, because that would lay Mæsa under a great obligation to them, who would not fail to distribute her riches among them.

The soldiers (a class of men for the most part extremely fond of changes), and who were already much averse to Macrinus, on account of the harsh manner in which he treated them, lent a favourable ear to these proposals, and even promised to do whatever should be required of them. Mæsa, perceiving that the troops were favourably inclined towards her, and that she could pretty safely depend on their endeavours and assistance, in consideration of the recompense she had led them to hope for, like a skilful woman seized the happy opportunity that presented itself to place her grandson upon the throne. She left Emesa in the night with all her family, and brought Heliogabalus into the camp, clothed in a magnificent robe that Caracalla had sometimes appeared in, which was artfully contrived on purpose to put the legions in mind of him. Eutychianus whispered it about that Mæsa was inclined to distribute a large sum of money among the troops; he gained over

the principal officers, while those whom he could not prevail upon to declare for him, since they felt uncertain about the issue, he persuaded to stand neutral. As soon as day appeared, they presented Heliogabalus to the soldiers, who proclaimed him Emperor, and put on him the imperial purple robe, giving him the name of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. After this ceremony came Mæsa's present. She caused gold and silver to be thrown among them in great abundance, nor could she possibly have done so more opportunely, for the soldiers immediately reported that they had found a son of Caracalla, and that Mæsa was distributing money lavishly among the troops; this made the soldiers flock together from all parts, in order to get their share of the booty, and these were so many additions to the new Emperor's party.

Macrinus was informed at Antioch of what was taking place in Phœnicia, but did not think a faction conducted by a woman was much to be feared; so, without stirring from Antioch, he contented himself with sending Julianus, præfect of the Prætorian Guards, with some troops to disperse the rebels; but this detachment, instead of fighting, joined them. For those who were in the camp, having made Heliogabalus mount the walls, told the new comers that he was the son of Caracalla, and reproached them with their unpardonable ingratitude, in taking up arms against

the son of an Emperor, from whom they had received so many benefits, and at the same time showed them bags full of money that Mæsa had given them. The sight of these was more persuasive than all that the others could allege; Macrinus's soldiers, to obtain the like reward, fell upon their officers, killed them, and then, being admitted into the camp, acknowledged Heliogabalus for Emperor and took the oath of fidelity to him. Mæsa knowing full well that they had not betrayed Macrinus for nothing, recompensed their perfidy, and sent Julianus's head to Antioch, whence Macrinus had already started (for he had heard what condition matters were in) in order to fight his antagonist; but afterwards he changed his design and returned to Antioch, whence he wrote to the governors of the provinces, and to the Senate, letters full of contempt for Heliogabalus, who, he said, was a silly blockhead, and whom he declared an enemy to the State. He then thought it expedient to be liberal to his soldiers, whom he did his utmost to exasperate against those who had taken part with the rebels; he gave his son the title of August, and thinking he had taken all the precautions that were necessary, remained very quiet at Antioch.

In the meantime Mæsa was resolved to pursue her aim, and having caused the army to quit their camp, conducted it towards Antioch in order to besiege Macrinus,

or else oblige him to come to a decisive battle. Macrinus then began to think the affair was no laughing matter. He marched out of Antioch to fight the enemy. The two armies met between Phœnicia and Syria.

That of Macrinus had a great advantage over the other, for besides the superiority of numbers, he had good generals; whereas Heliogabalus had nobody fit to command his army, for Gannys, who acted as general, had never served, and had done nothing all his life but amuse himself. Upon this occasion, however, the old observation, that good luck is better than skill, was verified; for Gannys at first gave his adversary sufficient trouble, Heliogabalus's troops fighting desperately, knowing that if they did not conquer they could expect no mercy on account of their rebellion. But some time after, not being able to resist the efforts of the Prætorians, they were put to flight.

Mæsa and Soemias seeing affairs change to their disadvantage, alighted from their chariot, and throwing themselves into the midst of those who fled, reproached them, with tears in their eyes, with their shameful behaviour to a prince they had just sworn to be faithful to. These remonstrances, accompanied by every argument they could think of that was capable of moving the soldiers, had such an effect, that they returned to the

battle. At that instant, Heliogabalus put himself at the head of his troops sword in hand, and shewed such resolution and courage, as would not have been expected from one of his age. The fight began again with more fury than ever, but with different result, for Heliogabalus's soldiers having beaten the first rank of their enemies, those that were worsted put their whole army into confusion. The Emperor seeing this, gave up all for lost, and a panic seizing him, he fled with some of his most faithful officers. The Prætorians continued the fight with great obstinacy, and maintained the honour of their corps; but Heliogabalus calling out to them, asked for whom it was that they fought and exposed their lives thus, since Macrinus had deserted them, whereupon they all declared for him, upon his promising that he would allow them to retain their rank according to their request.

Macrinus, who had taken off his imperial robe that he might not be known, got away as fast as he could, intending to go to Rome with all possible expedition, to consult and assemble his friends, but he was taken at Chalcedon, where he stopped to repose a little, and the soldiers cut off his head. Some of them were inclined to spare Diadumenus, and would have done so, had it not been for the letter he wrote to his mother about the con-

spiracy of Gellius; this proved fatal to him. Thus perished Macrinus, after a reign of fourteen months; its short duration shows that nothing is so precarious as power procured by unlawful actions. History makes no further mention of Nonia Celsa.

ANNIA FAUSTINA,
JULIA CORNELIA PAULA,
JULIA AQUILIA SEVERA,
WIVES OF THE EMPEROR HELIOGABALUS.

JULIA VARIA SOEMIAS,
HIS MOTHER.

JULIA VARIA MÆSA,
HIS GRANDMOTHER.

After Macrinus was put to flight, his army having declared for Heliogabalus, Mæsa conducted her grandson to Antioch, where the honours due to the Emperor were paid him, and he received the oath of the legions. Mæsa, who was full of schemes and projects, thought it fitting that the new Emperor should write to the Senate to entreat them to confirm his election, but his letter was not well calculated to bespeak their favour; for, whereas the preceding Emperors had never assumed any title till after they had been decreed them by the Senate, he insolently took, by his own authority, those of Emperor, Cæsar, August, Happy, son of Antoninus, and several

other pompous surnames. The obsequious Senate confirmed, however, what the soldiers had done, and, the more to please the new Emperor, they honoured in an extraordinary manner the memory of Caracalla, whose son he pretended to be. By the same decree the title of August was conferred upon Mæsa and Soemias, together with all the honours that had ever been given to the mothers of the Emperors.

The senators, for all this, regretted Macrinus extremely, and not without reason; for he could not possibly have had a more unworthy successor. To say the truth, Heliogabalus was very handsome, well made, and had a very agreeable countenance; but never did a fair outside conceal a more polluted soul. In him was to be found an unhappy collection of all sorts of vices. He possessed the malice and cruelty of all the tyrants that had ever reigned; gave himself up entirely to the most abominable lewdness; carried luxury, prodigality, and insolence to the highest pitch. Being informed that the Senate had ratified his election, and that he had nothing more to fear, he signalised the beginning of his reign by a horrible piece of barbarity and ingratitude, namely, the execution of Gannys, to whom he owed his education and the throne. This freedman had been preferred at Court by the interest of Mæsa, who had always had a great esteem

for him, because she had always found him faithful, and very zealous for the welfare of her family. In fact, Gannys, who had been tutor to Heliogabalus, acquitted himself of that duty to the general satisfaction; Heliogabalus himself was a witness of his behaviour at the last battle, which ended decisively in his favour, and was so convinced of the important service he did him upon that occasion that, in one of those fits of good humour to which he was now and then subject, he was inclined to choose him for a father-in-law, by making him marry his mother, Soemias, and to declare him Cæsar. These favours would have been no more than Gannys deserved, and would have done honour to the new Emperor's gratitude and acknowledgment. Soemias's reputation, indeed, was none of the best, for she led a very dissolute life; but Gannys was not so fastidious as to refuse to be the Emperor's father-in-law.

In the meantime, instead of honouring him, Heliogabalus put him to death. This cruel and ungrateful Emperor, not being able to endure that Gannys should be a spectator of his conduct, and especially since he took the liberty to advise him, ordered him to be executed, and was not even ashamed to dip his hands in the blood of that faithful servant by giving him the first blow himself.

This bloody affair was succeeded by a great many more equally unjust. Nestor, whom Macrinus had made colonel of the Prætorian Guards, and Agrippinus, who commanded in Syria, were put to death because they had fought for their Emperor; Pica and Rianus, who governed Arabia under Macrinus, lost their lives for not betraying their master; and Heliogabalus punished in them a fidelity he ought to have rewarded. But he was not content with persecuting virtue, he gave credit to vice, and honoured the greatest crimes. He debased the highest dignities in the empire by making them venal, or bestowing them on miserable eunuchs and infamous people who had been slaves, who were only known by their abominable lives, so that in heaping the greatest preferments on those unworthy wretches he left no recompense for true merit. He would not condescend to wear a Roman habit, as all his predecessors had done,[1] but chose his dress after the manner of the Phœnicians and Medians, which indeed was very graceful and magnificent, but at the same time savoured of the luxury and effeminacy of those nations. At last he quite forgot all the decorum that decency required, and which was suitable to his rank; and abandoning himself entirely to the most brutal debaucheries,

[1] Herodian. lib. 5. Lamprid.

passed the winter at Nicomedia in those shameful occupations. Mæsa, his grandmother (than whom nobody understood the world better), did not see all this without being sensibly concerned: it grieved her to the heart that her grandson should be remarkable for all sorts of bad qualities, and she was apprehensive that the Romans could never be brought to endure an Emperor who had nothing of the Roman about him, not so much as the fashion of his clothes. She gave him many wise admonitions upon that subject, but the flatterers he encouraged destroyed the force of her arguments. Heliogabalus, continually surrounded by those sycophants, and corrupted by their maxims, looked upon the advice of his grandmother as the mere whims of an old-fashioned woman, who would needs have him wear the Roman dress for no other reason than because all the former Emperors had done so. On the other hand, Soemias, by her pernicious counsels, effaced the little impression that Mæsa's good sense had made upon her son; and, by a base approbation of his behaviour, encouraged him in the gratification of all his vicious passions. Thus this prince, being hurried away by his irregular appetites, seduced by his young courtiers, and supported by the bad example of his mother, gave himself up to the most shameful course of life that can be imagined, and even

went beyond Caligula, Nero, or Domitian, whom he professed to imitate.

It is no new thing for flatterers to extol the weaknesses and vices of princes, and to applaud those actions that most deserve to be blamed; but it is not common to see a mother encourage her son in everything that is infamous. This, however, Soemias did, and this was the more blamable as she well knew that all the misfortunes Caracalla drew upon himself were owing to his cruelty and his debaucheries; she had therefore great reason to apprehend the same fate for her son. It is true that a young man seldom learns any good from a mother who is herself a libertine, and Soemias was too regardless of her own reputation to be very solicitous about that of Heliogabalus. Mæsa, indeed, who looked further into things, and weighed consequences, gave him better counsel; for instance, that he should go to Rome, where she said his presence was necessary; and, in fact, Macrinus's chief mistake had been his not going thither immediately after his election, but continuing at Antioch. The Emperor was at last convinced of what importance it was to him to gain over the Senate, and as soon as the winter was over set out for Rome.

His arrival there only served to make people regret Macrinus, for he renewed at Rome all the excesses that

he had practised at Nicomedia. He went to the Senate, and obliged the senators to invite Soemias, his mother, and Mæsa, his grandmother, to take their places among them. This was a monstrous innovation, and a scandalous degradation of the senatorial dignity. The proudest of the Empresses, and even those who had carried their authority the greatest lengths, never dreamed of assuming any such privilege; and we have observed in the life of Agrippina that the Senate broke up one day when she attempted to do the like. But the senators had now no longer the probity and resolution of their forefathers; the Emperor's will and pleasure was become the only law. Heliogabalus caused that to be permitted to Soemias and Mæsa, which Agrippina could never obtain, and which Livia never had the assurance to ask for. Thus the Senate entreated them to assist at their meetings, they took their places next to the consuls, voted, signed, and, in short, performed all the functions of senators.

Heliogabalus did not stop there. Not content with having made his mother a member of the Senate, he must needs put her at the head of another Senate, where she performed the office of president. He created a Senate of ladies, and appropriated to that purpose a palace that was situated upon the Quirinal; and in this grave tribunal were decided all weighty matters connected with

the sex,[1] particularly styles and fashions, order of precedence, and what best became each form and complexion. It was there deliberated which ladies had a right to be carried in a chair, which in a litter, who should be permitted to go on horseback, and who were to have the privilege of wearing gold or jewels. They very solemnly issued decrees about dress and other affairs of that nature as being of the greatest importance to the welfare of the public, and they assembled as frequently, and with as much regularity, as if the weightiest affairs of the empire were transacted among them.

If Soemias shone at the head of this ridiculous Senate, Mæsa was equally conspicuous in military matters. She appeared in an amazon habit at the camp, reviewed the Prætorian cohorts, and had the management of everything relating to the army. Thus did Heliogabalus, by his foolish and unprecedented infatuation, overturn all order and decency. One of the most extravagant things he introduced was the worship of his favourite god Elagabalus[2] with strange and unheard of ceremonies.

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[1] Lamprid. in Heliogab.

[2] Elagabalus was a surname given to the sun, which was adored by the people of Emesa. This divinity was nothing but a great stone, round at the bottom, and ending in the shape of a cone. It was black, and had some curious characters engraven upon it. The Phœnicians pretended that it fell from Heaven, and had the greatest veneration for it.

This god he caused to be brought from Emesa to Rome, built him a temple, which was one of the most magnificent in the city,[1] and had everything that was most sacred and revered carried out of the other temples into it, especially the celebrated statue of Pallas, which Æneas brought from Troy. Thus he caused the Romans the mortification of seeing a new and strange god preferred to Jupiter; and, by an unaccountable whim, he took it in his head to marry his god Elagabalus to Urania, that famous divinity that was so much respected in Africa. He caused it to be brought from Carthage, and celebrated the wedding at Rome and in the provinces with great pomp, saying that there was never a fitter match than that Elagabalus should marry Urania; that is, that the sun should marry the moon. But the tragical part of this new sort of worship was that the Emperor, to do honour to his god, in a brutal and abominable manner, sacrificed children, whom he chose out of the most illustrious families; and whilst these hellish sacrifices were going on, he celebrated the praises of his god in hymns, which he sung in the Syrian language, and made Soemias and Mæsa do the same.

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[1] Herodian. lib. 5.

We shall not take upon ourselves to enter into the details of Heliogabalus's life, which was one continued succession of all sorts of crimes; for it would only be a mark of disrespect to the reader, and of our small regard for decency, were we to enumerate the horrible acts of lewdness and lasciviousness that this detestable prince committed; we prefer to draw a veil over those shameful pollutions. After he had provided his god with a wife, he thought proper to choose one for himself; and, as he deprived the Carthaginians of their Urania in order to marry her to his Elagabalus, so he took it into his head to rob Pomponius of his wife Faustina. Annia Faustina was one of the most accomplished ladies in Rome, remarkable not only for her nobility, but the incomparable beauty of her person. She was great granddaughter to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose name and memory were held in the highest veneration among the Romans. She was then in the prime of her youth; and, at an age wherein there is but little discretion to be expected, she shewed[1] such prudence and virtue as had not been met with in her predecessors of that name.

When it happens that nobility, beauty and virtue are united in a young person, there can be no lack of

[1] Dio. lib. 79. Tristan. Comment. Hist.

admirers. The charming Faustina had abundance of them, but Pomponius Bassus was the happy man who, for his extraordinary merit, was preferred to all those who aspired to the honour of possessing the princess. Honour and goodness were hereditary in his family, which had been also rendered illustrious by the most important employments, he having been Governor of Rome, and afterwards consul. It might safely be affirmed that there was not in Rome a more honourable man than Faustina's husband. They lived together in that happy calmness and tranquility which in marriage is generally the consequence of reciprocal love, until Heliogabalus, being smitten with the charms of Faustina, looked upon her as a lady worthy of his esteem and affection. At first he contented himself with showing her all those tokens of his passion that are so natural to an assiduous lover; but whatever pains he took to make himself understood, Faustina, defended by her own virtue and her husband's merit, gave him no hopes of success; so that the Emperor, in the midst of all his pomp and splendour, made no impression upon the princess's heart.

The obstacles that violent love may meet with do not always prove a remedy; on the contrary, they very often serve only to heighten it. Heliogabalus, perceiving that Faustina's virtue gave

him but little room to hope for those favours that he had so easily obtained from other ladies less cruel, resolved to put her husband to death, in hopes that Faustina, who would not listen to him as a lover, might without difficulty be prevailed on to receive him as a husband, especially as he was invested with the sovereign authority. Thus was Pomponius already condemned, and nothing was wanting but to lay some crime to his charge that might furnish a fair pretence to put him to death; but, as that senator's conduct had always been without reproach, it was absolutely necessary to invent some calumny, the ordinary resource of tyrants. Heliogabalus complained that Pomponius took upon him to censure all his actions, that whatever passed in the palace was criticised by him; that Pomponius and his friend Messala had set up a sort of tribunal, where they were so audacious as to sit in judgment upon the conduct of Emperors, who ought not to be accountable for their behaviour; and, upon these false and imaginary crimes, the Emperor accused Pomponius and Messala to the Senate.

There was nobody present that did not know that Faustina's beauty was all Pomponius's crime. Heliogabalus's attachment to that charming lady and the absurdity of his complaint sufficiently declared the motives

of his accusation; and the sequel justified these suspicions. Messala was no more blameworthy than Pomponius. That senator had been twice consul, and was so influential that he had caused the Emperor Julianus to be declared an enemy to the State, and Severus to be elected Emperor. He was a man of great firmness and resolution, never influenced in the Senate by complaisance or flattery; and as he had nothing in view but the public interest, he was either useless or a hindrance to the Emperor's projects. Heliogabalus, therefore, during his residence at Nicomedia, sent for him thither, pretending that he stood in need of his assistance, but in reality to get him out of Rome, where he was apprehensive that he would oppose him; for there was nobody in the Senate more dreaded by the Emperor and his sycophants than Messala, who was always intrepid and immovable.

The rank that these illustrious men held in the Senate, the high esteem they enjoyed at Rome, and their virtue and reputation, deserved at least that the matter should be enquired into, and that judgment should not be too hastily given in a matter of so much importance; but Heliogabalus was too much in love to wait the issue of these tedious proceedings; so, forgetting that he himself was the accuser of Pomponius and Messala, he would needs be their judge also; and as they were too odious to

him to make it a matter of doubt whether they should be punished or acquitted, he resolved to make sure of his work. He therefore ordered them to be executed, and by that flagrant piece of injustice delivered himself, in Pomponius, from one who stood between him and the object of his passion; and, in Messala, from a magistrate who had revived the ancient liberty of Rome.

The tears that Faustina shed did honour to the merit of Pomponius; but Heliogabalus found the means to dry them. As it was not his intention to suffer her to remain long in mourning, he redoubled his solicitations, and pressed his point so eagerly and with so much importunity that he prevailed upon Faustina to venture upon a second marriage. In fact, she became wife to the Emperor, and was immediately honoured by the Senate with the title of August. It might be imagined that Faustina, being now amply recompensed for the loss of Pomponius, had reason to promise herself a great deal of happiness. By marrying the Emperor she had ascended the throne of her ancestors, and the violent love he had shown for her seemed to afford her reasonable grounds to hope for its continuance; but pleasures that are procured by crimes are of no long duration. The Emperor soon found those insipid which he had not scrupled to purchase with a horrid

murder. He was no sooner married than he was disgusted with Faustina, and showed that nothing is a more effectual cure for love than possession. He conceived for Cornelia as irresistible a passion as he had done before for Faustina.

Cornelia Paula belonged to one of the best families in Rome. It is generally imagined that she had been married before, and was a mother of children at least, Heliogabalus's pretext for marrying her seems to authorise this supposition. This prince, whose love was as soon cooled as warmed, no sooner saw Cornelia than he was persuaded it was impossible he should ever love anybody else; he paid his addresses to her very earnestly, and to cut short the matter, spoke of marriage. The misfortune of Faustina, whom he had abandoned notwithstanding all her merit, did not plead very much in his favour. A man who is fickle, always ready to change, is not very likely to secure a lady's affections, and Cornelia did not fail to reproach the Emperor with his having cast off, without any reason, the most amiable person in Rome. Be that as it may, the Emperor was provided with a plausible excuse, and Faustina's barrenness furnished him with it. He even informed the public of the motives of that divorce, and endeavoured to make it appear a convincing proof of his wisdom and prudence

that he should look out for a wife capable of giving him heirs and perpetuating the empire in his family, of which he said Faustina gave him no hopes; whereas, in Cornelia, he had all the reason in the world to expect the accomplishment of his desires, as she had already been a mother. These arguments, together with the dazzling prospect of the throne, induced Cornelia to supply the place of Faustina, and run the risk of meeting with the same fate. The nuptials were celebrated with incredible magnificence. Never had there been seen at Rome so pompous a ceremony. The Emperor went to enormous expense upon this occasion. All classes in the city partook of his bounty, and he heaped favours upon the senators, the knights, and the senators' wives. He gave the soldiers and the people several splendid entertainments, followed by all manner of shows and games; among the rest (what had never been seen before at Rome) a bloody battle between tigers and elephants.

The Senate went in a body to pay their respects, or rather homage, to the new Empress, and at the same time presented her with the title of August, which included all the honour that could be bestowed upon the wives of the Emperors; for they did not think they could possibly show too much zeal for a princess to whom Heliogabalus had given such extraordinary tokens of his esteem and

affection as to exhaust his treasures in honour of her. Nothing could be a greater instance of this prince's want of judgment and reflection than his not considering the bad consequences of precipitate marriages. It looked as if he had put himself to this excessive expense for no other reason than to make his inconstancy the more remarkable and to put a greater affront upon Cornelia; for, a few days after his marriage, he divorced her, and deprived her of the title of August.

So sudden an alteration struck the city with astonishment. People had, but a week before, been witnesses of the extraordinary pains the Emperor had taken to obtain her good graces, and were quite at a loss to guess what could occasion so quick and unexpected a change. Cornelia was very handsome, and her person extremely agreeable; her birth[1] was worthy of her fortune, and her behaviour had been always consistent with decency; but, notwithstanding all this, she became in so short a time a heavy burden to this whimsical and ridiculous Emperor. Heliogabalus was sensible of his unjust conduct in this affair, and was not a little embarrassed to invent a plausible excuse for it.

[1] Herodian, lib. 5.

Cornelia had done nothing to deserve such insulting treatment; and the public, who will criticise even the actions of monarchs, were very curious to know what sort of pretence the Emperor would find out to lend colour to his inconstancy; but Heliogabalus was cunning enough to give reasons that nobody could contradict. He said, that he could not bring his delicacy to be reconciled to certain bodily imperfections[1] from which Cornelia suffered, being well convinced that her modesty would not permit her to disprove his assertion.

The marriage was no sooner dissolved than this fickle prince ran after new pleasures. He looked out for a third wife, whom at last he found among the Vestal Virgins, not being at all ashamed to add this abominable and sacrilegious action to all the rest of his crimes. The vestals were young girls who consecrated their virginity to the Mother of the Gods by the most solemn vows, the breach of which was punished with death. They were held in great veneration at Rome. Their institution was sacred, their authority much respected, and their persons inviolable. There was, at that time, a vestal named Julia Aquilia Severa, daughter of the senator Aquilius Sabinus, who had been twice consul in Caracalla's reign. She was

[1] Dio. lib. 79.

one of the handsomest ladies in Rome, and the vestal's dress, instead of diminishing, heightened her beauty. The Emperor was so captivated with her charms that he fell in love with her at first sight; and, not being a man to deny himself anything he had a mind for, he paid frequent visits to the charming vestal. This alarmed the rest of that society; they were too well acquainted with the Emperor's impious character not to suspect his intentions, and therefore watched him very narrowly.

Severa was not so cruel. She prevailed upon herself to bear, with great patience, the Emperor's assiduities; for nothing so much flatters the vanity of a woman as to see a man at her feet to whom all others are inferior. She therefore received his visits very willingly, and listened attentively to his proposals of marriage. It is probable that she was not at all sorry to be compelled, by absolute power, to dispense with those vows which in all likelihood she had made without consulting her inclinations, and at an age when she was not competent to judge of the difficulty she might find in keeping them; for the vestals were admitted too young to consider the burden of the yoke they imposed upon themselves, so that instances were not wanting of their dishonouring the sanctity of those engagements by their gallantries, their oaths not being strong enough to get the better of their constitutions

and the impetuosity of youth. Be it as it may, Heliogabalus, in contempt of what was most sacred among the Romans, carried off the vestal, married her, and proclaimed her August.

The Senate looked upon this odious and detestable match as the forerunner of some terrible calamity to the empire. The laws had been always strictly put in force when a vestal had deserved punishment for breach of chastity, nor had the accomplices in the crime ever escaped the penalty; but, upon this occasion, the authority of the Senate was superseded, and they were reduced to the sad necessity of deploring a misfortune for which there was no remedy. Heliogabalus easily perceived the deep sorrow that this marriage caused to all classes in the city, as not only the strictest laws, but the most ancient and religious custom of the Romans had been thereby trampled under foot. The people exclaimed against it as an unheard of crime, capable of drawing down upon them the indignation of all the gods. A deep silence reigned among them, and such melancholy was seen on the countenances of the citizens that all the city seemed in deep mourning.

Though Heliogabalus did not usually give himself much trouble about justifying his actions, he yet thought it incumbent on him to excuse the step he had taken;

but he did it in a manner that was more offensive than the action itself, that was, by jesting about a crime for which,[1] as an historian says, he deserved the worst of deaths. He wrote to the Senate that, of all the failings a man was subject to there was none that more entitled him to pardon than those which were the effects of his frailty; that it was very difficult to resist the violence of love; that Severa's beauty did not give him time to reflect; that his passion had surprised his reason, but that, in short, the mischief being done, there was no help for it; that, after all, he did not see any reason they had to cry out so much against what he had done, for if all was considered it would be found that it would be no very strange thing for a priest of the sun to marry a vestal. That, on the contrary, they ought to rejoice to see two sacred persons united by the solemn bonds of marriage, because from the union of a pontiff with a vestal nothing could be produced but a race that must be celestial rather than mortal.

Severa found it no difficult matter to exchange her plain and simple dress for the imperial ornaments, and it must be confessed that her consent to this marriage could be attributed to nothing but unbounded ambition, for

[1] Herodian. lib. 5.

besides the breach of her vow, which she scandalously violated, the inconstancy of Heliogabalus, who thought nothing of marrying and unmarrying himself as often as he pleased, ought to have made her reject his solicitations. He exalted his mistresses to the throne only to have the pleasure of hurling them down again, without giving them time to taste the sweets of sovereignty.

Faustina and Cornelia, reduced to their former condition of life, lamented their foolish credulity, and it was not to be expected that Severa would be able to fix the wavering heart of a prince who was incapable of a perfect and constant affection. Accordingly, it was not long before her fall administered some consolation to the disgraced Empresses. Heliogabalus soon becoming tired of his favourite vestal, divorced her, and at the same time took the opportunity to ruin her father Sabinus. It would not have been consistent with the rest of his conduct if he had remained for any time without some new amour, for with him the conclusion of one passion was the beginning of another. He substituted another Empress in the place of Severa, and as speedily got rid of her for a fifth, and her again for a sixth. And so great a jest did he make of his marriages, and such was the mutability of his temper, that he took Severa back, and re-established her in all the glory and splendour he had

just stripped her of. If Severa had the satisfaction to be reinstated she had also, on the other hand, innumerable annoyances to submit to from the odd caprices, fickleness, and debaucheries of Heliogabalus, for never did any of the Emperors carry excesses to such a pitch. Not content with abandoning himself entirely to all sorts of pollutions, he generally passed the night in those infamous places that were appropriated to lewdness, where he brutally substituted himself in the place of the most remarkable courtesans, counterfeited their voices and gestures, and, prostituting himself to the bestiality of those whom the fury of their debaucheries had brought thither—such as buffoons and slaves—filled Rome with his abominations, so that it was said of him that he was a man for every woman, and a woman for every man.

His monstrous lasciviousness was only interrupted by acts of cruelty or folly, for his very diversions were fatal to somebody. Sometimes he took it into his head to cause so great a quantity of flowers to be thrown from a gallery upon the senators, who went to pay their court to him, that a great many were smothered. He passed whole days in driving chariots, and it was generally in the presence of the Princesses Mæsa and Soemias that he chose to show his skill in that low exercise, which exposed him to the ridicule of the people. At last, after innumerable follies and extravagances, he went so far as to be

formally married to a miserable slave named Hierocles, who, in a short time, became one of the richest and most powerful men in the empire. He was delighted to be called the mistress, the wife, the queen of Hierocles, and, that he might look the more like a woman, he had himself close shaved, took a distaff, and employed his time in spinning and other feminine occupations, to the great dishonour of the sex he intended to imitate. Thus do men commit the most unaccountable actions when they cease to be directed by reason and discretion.

Mæsa was in the utmost confusion at this shameful behaviour, and could not without the greatest concern be a witness of the scandal Heliogabalus brought upon the imperial dignity, which could not fail to end in some dreadful misfortune. She made use of all her art and address to correct her grandson's evil courses and persuade him to reflect a little upon the consequences of such irregularities, but it was all to no purpose. Heliogabalus was entirely guided by his mother, who encouraged him in his debaucheries, and by her own licentiousness set him an abominable example, for this vicious princess, forgetting the reserve and modesty of her sex and the regard which was due to her rank, abandoned herself to the most scandalous debaucheries and prostitutions.[1] Thus, far from opposing the depraved

[1] Lamprid. in Heliogab.

inclinations of her son, or endeavouring to reclaim him, she was quite satisfied with his course of life, and even commended him for it.

Heliogabalus's odious government became an insupportable yoke to the Romans, the weight of which he every day increased by his cruelties and ridiculous behaviour, which was equally detestable and contemptible. But what made the people lose all patience was his mad design to declare the infamous Hierocles, who but the other day was a wretched slave, Cæsar, and his successor to the throne. Mæsa did all[1] in her power to dissuade him from this resolution, which could not fail to bring eternal shame upon the empire. She represented to him the injury he would thereby do himself and his family, and, in order to intimidate him, she told him that so unworthy a choice could not fail to cause a sedition, and make the Senate, the officers of the army and the people revolt, but Heliogabalus, looking upon these remonstrances as so many impertinent reprimands, lost the respect he had till then shown to his grandmother, and answered with violent threats. Mæsa's arguments had, however, made such an impression upon his mind that he was afraid of executing his project; so true it is that

[1] Dio. lib. 79.

wholesome advice has generally a good effect, even upon those who are determined not to follow it.

"Mæsa, perceiving how difficult, or rather impossible, it was to work upon the obstinate temper of her grandson, so as to effect any considerable alteration in him, was convinced that a revolution could not be far off; for Hierocles had obtained such an ascendency over the Emperor that he was trusted with all his secrets, invested with his authority, and was the channel through which all favours at Court were to pass. This roused the jealousy of all the nobles, who could not bear that this upstart should have absolute control of the empire and dispose of their lives and fortunes. Mæsa foresaw the consequences, and had no doubt that a change would soon take place; she was even apprehensive of being involved in the misfortunes that threatened the Emperor, so that from that time she thought of taking care of herself and abandoning her grandson to his evil destiny. The brilliant appearance she had made at Court with the Empress Julia, her sister, and the power she had enjoyed during the reigns of Severus and Caracalla, gave her such a taste for grandeur that she could not endure the idea of returning to the obscure private life she had been forced to be content with in Macrinus's time, and which she had reason to look forward to, if the prince who should succeed

Heliogabalus should happen not to be favourably disposed towards her. She therefore did her utmost to arrange matters so that the empire might devolve upon somebody she could reckon upon, who would preserve to her her rank and authority, which she was most solicitous about.

She could think of nobody more proper for her purpose than young Alexianus, her grandson, cousin german to Heliogabalus, and son of Mamea; and she thought she might the more easily procure him the empire as he was next heir, Heliogabalus having no child. If the Emperor could be induced to adopt him, she imagined there would be no difficulty in the matter; but, as Heliogabalus was of a very obstinate temper, she knew she would need all her skill and address to carry her point without exasperating him. Mæsa had, however, so studied him, and was so well acquainted with his temper, that she succeeded; for as she knew his weak side, she watched the favourable moment, and finding him disposed to listen to her, she gave him to understand that it could be nobody's interest so much as hers to give him such advice as would prove most to his advantage, and prevent those evils she was apprehensive of. "It is certain," said she, "that the empire alone would require all your attention, but the office of priest of the sun must necessarily take

up part of your time. Two such important offices are too much for one person. Your zeal for Elagabalus is, without doubt, very commendable, but your care and concern for the welfare of the empire cannot be less than your respect for that adorable divinity. I agree with you that all this is fatiguing and laborious, but nothing hinders you from laying part of the burden upon some other person, which would leave you more at leisure to attend to the service of your god. Choose somebody you can depend upon, but take care how you trust a stranger; it would be putting too great confidence in him, for of all things you must beware of selecting one who would be likely to arrogate all the authority to himself, and by degrees employ the power you have put into his hands against you. Look out for someone in your own family upon whom you may safely rely.

"There is Prince Alexianus, your cousin, than whom I think nobody better qualified in every respect, and from whom you have nothing to fear; for, besides that he is too young to cause you any jealousy, he has the honour to be related to you, and consequently cannot but have your interests at heart."

The Emperor, in whom some respect for his grandmother still lingered, especially when she did not attempt

to lay him under any restraint, approved the proposal, and even looked upon it as a striking token of her love and affection for him. He carried Alexianus to the Senate, where he declared that he adopted the young prince for his son. He gave him the name of Alexander, made him Cæsar and consul, and protested that it was his god Elagabalus that had inspired him with this thought. The Senate authorised his choice, and the people heard it with great joy.

After Heliogabalus had adopted Alexander he thought he had a right to require what he pleased of him, and because he had associated him in the empire he was resolved he should imitate him in his follies. Mamea, the young prince's mother, on the contrary, laboured in secret to instil good ideas into his mind, and to keep him aloof from all the pleasures, or rather madnesses, of the Emperor. She was a woman of modest and regular life, and employed all her time in giving her son a good education. She took no part in her sister's debaucheries, so that her reputation was as illustrious as that of Soemias was infamous. She acquired great experience in State affairs with Mæsa, her mother, who during the reigns of Severus and Caracalla had a great share in the government. These two Emperors greatly esteemed Mamea for her wisdom and other qualities, and Caracalla allowed her to retain the rank and honours she became entitled to when married to Macrinus, although

strictly speaking she had forfeited them by her second marriage with Claudius Julianus, who was of inferior rank. But nothing did her so much honour as the care she took to inspire her son with sentiments of moderation and humanity, and to make him hate all those diversions that were inconsistent with purity and decency, by giving him privately such good lessons and advice as served for an antidote against the infectious example and conversation of Heliogabalus, who seemed determined to make him a partner in his vices, as he had done in his dignity. She had, further, the precaution to cause masters and preceptors to visit him secretly, who taught him the sciences, and such exercises as were becoming his rank and quality, and formed his tender mind to virtue, in spite of all the Emperor's attempts to make him in love with those low, shameful, and contemptible occupations in which he himself employed his time, and for which Alexander showed a great aversion.

As nothing more binds and cements friendship than a conformity of sentiments and inclinations, so nothing is more apt to disunite than a difference in temper and humours. Heliogabalus and Alexander were born with quite opposite characters, so that it would have been very unusual if there had been a perfect union between them. Accordingly, the Emperor, not finding in his colleague

that taste for the shameful pleasures, gross amusements, and frequent cruelties that he himself was so fond of, began to hate him, and repented that he had adopted him. The people's affection for the young prince much increased his jealousy and dislike, so that he was determined to destroy his partner. He commanded Alexander's officers and domestics either to massacre or poison him, but found them so faithful to their master that neither his threats nor promises could influence them. Besides, Mamea was so vigilant and so continually upon her guard against the Emperor's plots and designs that she would never suffer her son to eat or drink anything that came from Heliogabalus or those belonging to him, being very careful to have all his provisions dressed by her own servants, on whom she could safely depend; and, that Alexander might have it in his power to ingratiate himself with the troops, she furnished him with money to distribute among them. This liberality gained him, indeed, the affection of the soldiers, but it irritated Heliogabalus more and more against him, for he knew that by these means Alexander was endeavouring to corrupt the legions; he therefore hesitated no longer about putting him to death, but resolved to do it at all costs, and that Mamea should be served the same way for being, as he suspected, the person in reality responsible; but, not content with taking away his life, he was

minded to degrade him, and strip him of the name which he had given him at his adoption, together with the title of Cæsar. In fact, he sent people to erase his name and title from all inscriptions where they had been inserted.

This attempt ended in quite a different manner from what Heliogabalus intended, for, as soon as the above orders began to be put into execution, the soldiers mutinied, and flocked to the palace to defend Alexander, who they no longer doubted would fall a sacrifice to the Emperor's resentment; and, being informed that Heliogabalus had withdrawn to another palace, they ran thither to assassinate him, and would have done so had not Antiochitus, præfect of the Prætorian cohorts, put a stop to their fury, by reminding them of the oath they had taken to Heliogabalus, and which they were going to violate by murdering him. They were even forced to carry Alexander into the camp to convince the soldiers of his being alive. Thus this wicked Emperor, by attempting to destroy his cousin, did him the greatest possible service, contrary to his intentions.

This evident token, however, of the soldiers' affection for Alexander provoked Heliogabalus beyond all measure. He looked upon this sedition as the most violent attack upon his authority, and upon his cousin as his most formidable enemy. The more he perceived the soldiers

loved him, the more did his hatred increase. He was so little able to conceal his aversion for the young prince that he could not help showing it upon every occasion, particularly the first day of the year, at which time Alexander, as consul, had to attend the Emperor to the Senate, and then to the Capitol, to perform the usual ceremonies. Heliogabalus had a mind to go thither alone, and not to allow his cousin to bear him company. Mæsa and Soemias represented to him that so glaring an exhibition of hatred would entirely alienate from him the love of the people; that by such impolitic conduct he would be acting against his own interests instead of hurting the prince. That so scandalous a mistake (the whole blame of which would certainly fall upon him) would furnish the soldiers with a pretence to revolt, which he ought by all means to prevent, as they seemed only too ripe for it already. That in so delicate a conjuncture he ought to be very careful how he omitted or changed anything in the ancient customs.

These remonstrances so intimidated the Emperor that, after having for a long time resisted the entreaties of the two princesses, he determined about noon to go to the Senate with Alexander and Mæsa, who took her place there as usual; however, he obstinately persisted in his resolution not to go to the Capitol, so as to deprive Alexander of the honour of performing the accustomed sacrifices

upon that occasion (at which the consuls were to appear in all their pomp and splendour), and ordered them to be performed by the governor of the city, as if the consuls had been absent. His having been prevailed upon to take Alexander with him to the Senate did such great violence to his inclinations that he determined he should perish, whatever ill consequences it might be attended with.

His jealousy inspired him with these violent ideas, and fortified him at first against whatever might happen, but his timidity soon weakened his resolution, and made him apprehensive of the consequences. He could not doubt but the Senate and the armies, who had the greatest affection for Alexander, would not leave his death unpunished; but, on the other hand, he flattered himself that if the deed were once done, Alexander's most zealous friends, having nothing further to hope from him, would not give themselves much trouble about avenging his death. In this state of irresolution, he thought he could not do better than sound the people, and learn what their sentiments would be if they imagined that Alexander was dead. For this purpose he kept the prince within the palace, and gave out that he was dying. This news, being spread in a moment all over the city, caused general consternation amongst the people. Nothing was to be heard but murmurings and threats. The soldiers flocked together, refused

to mount guard as usual at the palace, and, shutting themselves up in their camp, resolved to go directly to the Emperor and oblige him to deliver up Alexander to them.

This terrified the Emperor, and, fearing that he had carried the matter too far, he conducted Alexander into the camp, accompanied by Soemias and Mamea. As soon as the prince appeared, the soldiers shouted for joy, and, by the ardent vows they offered for his prosperity, sufficiently shewed how much they had it at heart, at the same time remaining quite silent as to the Emperor. This was fresh matter of discontent for Heliogabalus, and the fact of the soldiers preferring Alexander's welfare so much before his exasperated him to that degree that the next morning he assembled the Senate, and condemned to death those who had appeared most zealous in behalf of the prince.

This ill-timed severity was his ruin; the whole camp mutinied, and though the Emperor had proscribed only those whom he considered most guilty, the others could not see their comrades sacrificed to his fury without apprehending the like treatment. They unanimously cried out that it was high time to destroy the tyrant and raise Alexander to the throne. Nothing is more dangerous than the first transports of a popular insurrection:

it is a torrent that carries all before it. The Emperor, seeing his life in danger, was inclined to have recourse to flight, but being in the midst of the camp, whence it was no easy matter to extricate himself, he implored the assistance of those about him. The præfect of the guards, Hierocles, and some others who had accompanied him, made some efforts to defend him against Alexander's soldiers, and the skirmish in a little time became a battle. Soemias and Mamea, perceiving that the fortune of their respective parties depended on the issue of this fight, separated. Each put herself at the head of her own friends, and performed the part of general, encouraging her soldiers with promises of reward, and endeavouring to corrupt those of her adversary, so that these two sisters were seen labouring to the utmost of their power to procure each other's destruction.

During the combat Heliogabalus hid himself in a place where were thrown all the excrements and filth of the camp, and whither Soemias, his mother, followed him, when she found that her party was beaten; but Alexander's soldiers, looking diligently for him, found him at last, and massacred him in the arms of Soemias, who held him fast as it were to protect him, and afterwards killed her, in like manner, with their poniards. The Senate were in raptures of joy at the news of his death,

and the first decree they made was that no woman should ever be permitted to sit in the Senate. Such was the end of the infamous Heliogabalus, and his abominable life deserved no better one. It was foretold him that he should perish miserably by a violent and untimely death, and, in order to disappoint any that should attack him, he carried about him silken cords to hang himself with, a silver poniard to stab himself, and poison in a gold box, that he might choose what kind of death he liked best. He also caused a high tower to be built, in which he might take shelter in case of necessity; this he paved with silver and enriched with diamonds and precious stones, that, if he should prefer to cast himself from top to bottom to any of the other methods of death, it might be said that his end was magnificent.

History makes no further mention of the Empresses Faustina, Cornelia, and Severa.

MEMMIA, THE DAUGHTER OF VARIUS MARCIANUS, SALLUSTIA BARBIA ORBIANA, WIVES OF ALEXANDER SEVERUS. MAMEA, MOTHER OF THAT EMPEROR.

After Heliogabalus had been killed in the camp of the Prætorians, the soldiers proclaimed young Alexander August, and attended him to the palace. More universal joy was never seen at Rome, where each individual seemed to promise himself all possible happiness from the prince's election. At the same time as the Senate declared him Emperor, they gave him the titles of August and Father of the State. They were also inclined to honour him with the surname of Antoninus, and the title of Great, which had been given to Alexander of Macedon, but the young prince refused it with a modesty that made him more worthy of it. It is certain that, if Alexander had reason to be well pleased at the zeal and affection that all classes in the city showed in his behalf,

it must be also confessed that never prince of his age gave better proofs of being worthy of it. As to his person, he was very tall, well made, and had a most agreeable countenance, in which was something so manly and warlike that it bespoke the love and respect of all who approached him. His eyes were so lively and brilliant that people could not bear he should look steadfastly at them. His mental endowments were in no way inferior to his bodily perfections, for in him all the virtues were united in an eminent degree. He was mild, affable, modest, humble, an enemy to vice and vicious people, as careful to make others do justice as he was to do it himself. To these noble inclinations Nature had added an apt and docile disposition, which made him entirely submissive to the advice of those who were entrusted with his education, and who, not finding any bad habits in this young prince to struggle against, had nothing to do but to cultivate and bring to maturity the good seed which had been sown in so fruitful a soil.

Alexander was but thirteen years old when he came to the throne. The Senate decreed to Mamea, his mother, the title of August, that of Mother of the State, and all those honours which they had so lavishly bestowed upon the wives and mothers of the Emperors. But it must be acknowledged that, though many of those princesses

were unworthy of the pompous and magnificent honours that had been decreed them, they were no more than what Mamea deserved. She was exceedingly strict and prudent in her behaviour, having never in her whole life taken any step that could afford the least excuse for calling her virtue in question.[1]

Mamea thoroughly deserved the honours the Senate had decreed her, were it only on account of the good education she had given her son, and the care she took to place no persons about him but such as were of known virtue and integrity. People of corrupt lives found no admittance into the palace, and especially those debauched instruments of Heliogabalus's shameful pleasures and cruelties were strictly prohibited. She banished all flatterers—that poisonous race of vermin with which Courts are often infected, and whose pernicious counsels are capable of seducing even the best disposed people. She did not stop there; for, being convinced that nothing is more pernicious, nor a greater promotion of vice, than idleness, she was careful to keep him well employed in such occupations as should not afford him leisure to run into those amusements that might have been prejudicial to him; for which reason she chose to be generally

[1] Euseb. Hist. 6. 15, Nicephor. Call. Hist. 5. c. 17.

present when he was administering justice, or regulating the affairs of the empire.

It is certain that Mamea could not possibly have taken wiser precautions; but, on the other hand, it must be owned that the young prince's good disposition made her work very easy and agreeable. What a surprising progress will education make in a person so well inclined as Alexander! He was very attentive to the good advice of his mother and his preceptors, and followed it strictly. He showed the greatest zeal for the public good, and made excellent regulations for the government of the empire. One of the first things he did was to abolish the odd and fantastical worship of the god Elagabalus, and send back to Emesa the stone for which Heliogabalus had so ridiculous a veneration. He soon gave the city quite another appearance, by reforming the abuses that his predecessors had either introduced or connived at. He restored to the Senate their ancient splendour and dignity, by placing in it such persons as, by their merit and birth, were worthy of that honour, and by turning out those infamous people with whom Heliogabalus had filled it. In his reign no other qualifications were necessary as a recommendation to office than honour and probity; for Alexander (deaf to all considerations of friendship and kindred in the distribution of important posts) regarded nothing but merit and virtue.

Mæsa had the satisfaction of seeing these happy beginnings of her grandson's reign; and it must be acknowledged that she had greatly contributed to his noble sentiments and inclinations by her good advice. She died soon after at a very advanced age.[1] Alexander procured her immortality, and all those superstitious honours that were usually given to the mothers and wives of Emperors. He was not unmindful of the obligations he was under to this princess, who had prevailed upon Heliogabalus to adopt him.

The death of Mæsa brought fresh anxieties upon Mamea, for as the former of these ladies had been a very active and vigilant guard of all the young Emperor's actions and behaviour, so it now became more immediately incumbent upon her to supply that loss. To cultivate his mind with the attention that was necessary, and at the same time to take care of all the affairs of the empire, were no trifling occupations; her endeavours were, however, attended with such success that, in spite of those who rail at the government of women, it may be affirmed that the city and provinces were never ruled with more wisdom and prudence. As she was persuaded that nothing was so dangerous and apt to seduce a young

[1] Herodian. lib. 6.

man as being invested with absolute power, she selected (with the assistance of the Senate) sixteen persons, the most remarkable for gravity,[1] experience, and purity of manners, whose business it was to protect him against those vices and failings to which the impetuosity of youth is liable, and the pernicious influence of flatterers. Ulpian, a famous lawyer, who was without dispute the principal person of that select body of men, was particularly zealous in the business he undertook, and became so great a favourite with the Emperor that Mamea began to be jealous of him, for she could not bear that her son should have so great an esteem for anybody but herself. At last, however, perceiving that Ulpian gave the Emperor no advice but what was salutary and discreet, she herself laboured for the advancement of that great man, and defended him against some mutinous soldiers, who, not being able to endure the authority that he assumed over them, would have killed him. She also made him præfect of the Prætorian Guards, which dignity afterwards cost him his life. The authority of these governors was, however, subordinate to hers, for Mamea did not suffer her son to be guided by them, except in so far as they conformed to her directions; and the Emperor

[1] Lamprid. in Alex. Herodian. lib. 6.

paid so blind and implicit an obedience to his mother that he followed her advice even when he could not approve of it, for which he has been much blamed. People have reproached him[1] with being such a slave to his mother's opinion as to have been often thereby prevailed upon to act in a manner quite contrary to his reputation and interests.

The vigilance of these grave senators, who were as so many Arguses to watch the Emperor's conduct, did not appear to Mamea to be a sufficient guard against the temptations and violent outbursts of youth; she therefore thought it necessary, in order to prevent his running into criminal pleasures, to procure him such as were lawful. She determined to marry him, though he was but about fifteen years of age, and was of opinion that her own interest required that she should take this step, for as she gratified her ambition by enjoying the sovereign authority without control, so she took it for granted that any daughter-in-law of her choosing would lie under such obligations to her as to be very well satisfied with whatever share of power she was pleased to allow her, and selected a relation of her first husband for that purpose.

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[1] Herodian.

Varius Marcianus, a near relation of Alexander's father, had a daughter no less remarkable for the beauties of her mind than for those of her person; and though she could not boast of a very illustrious extraction, she was always reckoned upon a level with the most noble persons in the empire, on account of the many important victories of her father in Illyria, as well as the honour she had of being allied to the Imperial family. Mamea, flattering herself that it would be in her power to govern her as she did her son, proposed the match to Alexander, who, never having been accustomed to contradict his mother, made no objection. The Senate, with great pleasure and satisfaction, decreed her the title of August, and all the other marks of their respect that had been conferred upon the Empresses her predecessors, which Mamea was very well satisfied with, as it did honour to her choice. We shall, however, find in the sequel that these titles, particularly that of August, occasioned a misunderstanding between the two princesses that was attended with fatal consequences.

These nuptials having been celebrated, Mamea resolved to look out for a proper husband for the Princess Theoclea, her daughter, and determined in favour of the son of Maximinus, who, from a shepherd, became a soldier, and chief of a legion which Alexander had given him command

of, after having made him a senator, not knowing that in this officer he was heaping favours upon his murderer. Maximinus, the father, was, without dispute, a good soldier and brave officer, but of rough, unpolished manners, that savoured of the rudeness and barbarity of his nation and the lowness of his birth. It is reported that his son Maximus was more civilised, but at the same time more proud and insolent. It was, however, to him that Mamea resolved to give her daughter; but as the Emperor, her son, was not then at Rome, she communicated her design to him by letter. Alexander did not like it; for, as he was very fond of his sister, he was apprehensive that the princess, who had been brought up at Court and well educated, would never be reconciled to the sour and morose tempers of the Maximins; but, as he had the greatest desire to oblige his mother, he contented himself with representing to her that he could not indeed but acknowledge that Maximinus was a good officer, and that he had a great regard for his merit; but that there was something so disagreeable in his manners and person that neither the air of the Court nor his long service in the army had been able to correct it. That the princess, his sister, having been used to Greek customs and polite society, would find it extremely difficult to endure a father-in-law of such a character. That, though the son

was of a disposition somewhat more tolerable, yet he did not think it reasonable that a princess possessing her accomplishments should be matched with a person who, in his opinion, was not equal to her in any respect, particularly with regard to his temper. That, since she was inclined to marry her daughter, he thought she could not find a more suitable husband than Messala, who was a Roman of illustrious birth, adorned with all the good qualities that could be desired, and who, in all probability, would one day make a considerable figure in his military capacity. He added, nevertheless, that he did not venture to oppose her inclinations; but, on the contrary, left her at full liberty to act as she thought proper. It is very likely that Mamea approved of her son's arguments, since she made no further mention of this marriage.

Though Alexander loved his wife extremely, he did not give himself up so entirely to the pleasures of marriage as to neglect the welfare of the State, which was always the principal object of his care. He abolished some of the taxes and lessened others, and never allowed his private interest to interfere with that of the public. As for the arts and sciences, he rescued them from the contemptible situation his predecessor had left them in, by honouring with his protection and liberality those great

men whose genius and learning he admired. He founded schools[1] in which he settled all sorts of professors, and gave pensions to a certain number of scholars who were of rank, but in poor circumstances.

He erected many sumptuous buildings and repaired others, adorning the city with a great number of statues. But what ingratiated him most of all with the people was his esteem for those who behaved well, and the care he took to punish such as deserved chastisement, especially those who were corrupt or partial in the administration of justice, in which case he never pardoned even his best friends. His palace was open to all those who were distinguished for virtue and goodness, but such as were of a contrary character he could not endure. He carried this so far that, according to the historians, he would not permit people of indifferent reputation to pay their respects to his wife nor his mother, as if there had been something infectious about them. He was a strict observer of justice, but, at the same time, his severity was always tempered with mildness and clemency; for, during his whole reign, he never ordered any person to be put to death, leaving capital crimes to the decision of the Senate. No flatterers could gain admittance to him,

[1] Lamprid.

as he considered them to be his most dangerous enemies. As he was sincere in his words and actions, he detested cunning and artifice; but, above all, he hated those who, holding high offices, made a traffic of their influence and interest, for, in those times, as well as the present, there were persons at Court who received money and presents for services which they promised to do, but never did. Very ready to give words, they would undertake to obtain, from the Emperor or his ministers, favours and offices, which they forgot as soon as the petitioner was out of sight. Vetronius Turinus excelled in this trade. He had insinuated himself[1] in such a manner into the good graces of the Emperor that he became his chief favourite, though he had very little to recommend him. To tell the truth, Alexander put such confidence in this man, who had no one good quality, as did but small honour to his character, for the public, who did not find in Turinus that merit that might have been expected from the high degree of favour he was in, thought Alexander either not so judicious as he ought to be, or too complaisant. Turinus, in the meantime, lost no opportunity of making the most of his interest, and did not scruple to receive money from all those who had favours to ask,

[1] Lamprid. in Alex.

and addressed themselves to him. He encouraged the people as much as possible to apply to him, and boasted that he could do what he pleased with the Emperor, promising them success with so much assurance that whoever was so happy as to gain his friendship had no doubt of obtaining all he could wish for. It was, however, but very seldom that he gave himself any trouble about those whose money and presents he had received; but if they happened to succeed, by whatever means it was, he took the merit of it to himself.

Alexander had some suspicion of this traffic, and was extremely provoked at it; but being determined to find out the truth, he ordered a person who requested a favour of him to apply to Turinus, and then to come and let him know what passed. Turinus did not fail, as usual, to promise to recommend his case to the Emperor; and soon after, having met the petitioner, he assured him that his business was going on satisfactorily, and he did not doubt but he would succeed upon a second application; but gave him to understand that he did not employ his interest gratis. The other bound himself before witnesses to pay him a great sum of money.

The Emperor was acquainted with the whole transaction; he granted the favour required, for which

Turinus received payment, though he had done nothing to entitle him to it. Alexander, having got all the information he wanted, ordered Turinus to be apprehended, and that all who had anything to allege against him should be heard. The consequence of this was that he was convicted of innumerable acts of this kind. He was condemned to be tied to a gallows, under which was kindled hay and green wood, which suffocated him. The crime he had committed was called "selling smoke," so that his punishment was conformable to his guilt.

Alexander, however, drew a useful lesson from this iniquitous proceeding of Turinus; it taught him not to trust anybody with his secrets for the future, except Ulpian, whose fidelity he knew he could depend upon, nor to permit any other person to solicit favours. By this commendable behaviour, together with his affability and modesty, he acquired the love and esteem of all the world. He would never permit anybody to call him Lord; and his humility was such that he used to visit his friends familiarly, and, inviting himself to their houses, would sit down among them without ceremony or distinction, acting less like an Emperor than a private person. At his table was served nothing but what was common,

and all those who were remarkable for honesty and goodness were admitted to it with as much freedom as if he had been their equal.

If this excellent prince could not be reproached with pride or extravagances, neither was he ever accused of any excess in his apparel, which was always plain, without jewels or embroidery ; he seldom went to the expense of silk garments, his virtue being his chief ornament. This frugality served as a model to his courtiers and all persons of distinction, who were ashamed to fare more delicately than the Emperor himself. The ladies had the same example to follow in the Empress, by Alexander's direction ; for an ambassador from the East having presented her with two pearls of an extraordinary size and weight,[1] the Emperor would not permit her to wear them, saying he would never consent that his wife should introduce the pernicious custom of wearing rich jewels ; so he ordered them to be sold by auction.

The Empress could have wished that Alexander had been less rigid than he was upon this occasion. It was not without considerable regret that she saw the pearls that were intended to adorn her person likely to pass into other hands ; but she was spared that mortification,

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[1] Lamprid. vit. Alex.

for nobody offered to bid for them.[1] Whether it was that the price was excessive, or that people were afraid to encourage an extravagance that the Emperor took so much pains to discountenance, the pearls were brought back to the Empress, though she had not the satisfaction of making use of them; for Alexander sent them to adorn the statue of Venus.

The Emperor's zeal to suppress luxury was the more worthy of praise, as it did not proceed from sordid avarice, a vice unworthy of a great prince, but from the most consummate prudence; for, by careful retrenchment, he was always in a position to defray necessary expenses, and then it was that he displayed his magnificence and generosity. In fact, he blamed covetousness as much as prodigality, and did not, as history informs us, spare his mother in that respect; for, perceiving that she had recourse to scandalous and sometimes unlawful methods to heap up money, he told her one day, in a respectful manner,[2] that so great economy did not become a princess of her rank, who ought, on the contrary, to be liberal and beneficent; that he could not conceive what use she intended to make of the treasure she was scraping

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[1] Lamprid.

[2] Herodian. lib. 6.

up with so much pains and trouble, and by such ways and means as did not appear to all the world to be strictly consistent with innocence.

Mamea, who never wanted presence of mind, was not at a loss for a specious and plausible pretence for her avarice. She represented to her son that, money being the sinews of the State, and the very life of affairs, particular regard must be paid to it. That she did not lock up her money in her coffers for her own private advantage, but to employ it to good purpose when need arose. That if the soldiers, who are continually given to change, should revolt against him, there was no speedier or more effectual method to bring them back to their duty than a reasonable distribution of money. That a well-timed bounty among the legions would maintain them in their fidelity; for that the troops would never fail to support that side where most money was to be got; and, in short, that it was in order to prevent or extinguish rebellions that she heaped up those riches for which he reproached her.

These reasons appeared sound, but did not satisfy Alexander, who was not desirous of gaining the goodwill and affection of the soldiers upon such conditions. He looked upon this extraordinary precaution of his mother as unworthy of the glory of his reign, and was of opinion

that, the more the legions were interested, the more they were to be suspected.

If Mamea's covetousness caused Alexander a great deal of vexation, her ambition was not less a cause of anxiety to him.

She had received from the Senate all the honours that flattery could invent, and even more than had ever been conferred upon the wives or mothers of any of the preceding Emperors. They had decreed her, not only the title of August, but also that of Mother of the Armies,[1] of the Senate, and of the State. Thus, it might reasonably have been imagined that this would have been sufficient to gratify her vanity; it was all, however, too little to cure her of the ridiculous jealousy she had conceived at her daughter-in-law's enjoying the title of August, which she thought was due only to herself. She ought to have considered that an empty title was all she had to boast of, for Mamea engrossed all power and authority to such a degree that she did and ordered everything according to her own will and pleasure. This unbounded ambition caused her to treat the young Empress in a most inhuman manner, for, without having the least regard either for her rank or for the love her husband had for her,

[1] Spon. Miscel.

or in short, for common decency and good manners, she suffered herself to be so hurried away by her passion as to use this unfortunate princess extremely ill, and persecute her cruelly.[1]

Alexander had never been in so disagreeable a situation; this misunderstanding between his mother and his wife gave him a great deal of trouble; for, if he had taken part with Mamea he must have sacrificed a most amiable wife, who loved him above all things; and, on the other hand, he could not think of contradicting his mother, to whom he owed his fortune. The Empress was well aware of the vexation these disputes must needs cause her husband, and was prudent enough not to require that he should declare for her; but that she might not be exposed to Mamea's envy and ill-nature, she quitted the palace, and retired to her father's house, imagining that by this voluntary banishment she would cease to give her mother-in-law any further cause for jealousy. This precaution was very discreet, but it did not satisfy Mamea, for wherever the young Empress was, she was still August, and the Emperor's mother could not endure that any person but herself should enjoy that title. She did not therefore suffer the Empress to be quiet in her retreat,

[1] Herodian. lib. 6.

but, on the contrary, found means to persecute her even there; and not content with that, she could not help showing marks of her indignation to Marcianus, the Empress's father, having been informed that he was much displeased at her injustice and cruelty towards his daughter.

Marcianus was not courtier enough to have learnt the art of dissimulation; he could not be an indifferent spectator of the ill-usage his daughter met with; so, thinking it useless to complain to Alexander of Mamea, who kept him in the utmost subjection, and perhaps urged on by his ambition as well as resentment, he formed a conspiracy against his son-in-law.[1]

The rank he held in the empire facilitated this bold undertaking, for, besides the honour he had acquired by his victories, he was promoted by the Emperor, his son-in-law, to the highest offices, and was become very important from his near alliance with Alexander. Thus, depending on the great authority he had in the army, he took refuge in the Prætorian camp, as if to avoid the persecutions of Mamea; he there exaggerated the unlimited ambition of that princess, who in the name o her son, exercised a tyrannical power, and whose envy and

[1] Lamprid. Herodian.

jealousy had reached such a pitch that she could not endure that the Empress should take the title of August, which the Senate had decreed her, which all the orders of the empire had given her, and which was due to the Emperor's wife. After having done all that was possible to irritate the soldiers against Mamea, he put himself under their protection; but this scheme did not succeed according to his intention, for the troops were too fond of Mamea to consent to anything contrary to her interests. Marcianus, by this step, only discovered his design, and drew upon himself more and more the indignation of Mamea, to which he soon fell a victim. Instead of prevailing upon the soldiers to espouse his cause and revolt in his favour, as he was in hopes would be the case, he expiated his rashness by his death. The Empress shared her father's misfortunes, of which she had been the innocent cause, and was banished into Africa, whither she carried only the empty shadow of that grandeur and useless title that had occasioned her disgrace. Alexander, dearly as he loved her, had not the resolution to exert his authority in behalf of this unfortunate princess. He saw her condemned to an unjust and rigorous banishment without being able to afford her any other relief than his sorrow and affliction.

History does not inform us whether the Empress died

in exile, but we are told that Alexander married a second wife, who, in all appearance, was chosen by Mamea, and was probably one who did not insist upon the title of August. This lady's name was Memmia, daughter of the consul Sulpicius, and grand-daughter of Catulus. The Senate did not fail to decree her the title of August,[1] as may be seen by her medals, but it may be taken for granted that she did not accept it, for fear of bringing upon herself the misfortunes of the preceding Empress. She was not, however, exempt from pride and haughtiness, for it went much against her inclinations that the Emperor should go to the public baths, and mix familiarly with people of low degree, divesting himself of all his pomp and grandeur, as if this humility, so charming and commendable in a prince, was any real diminution of his glory. But Alexander was far above this poor way of thinking, and when his mother and his wife reproached him with his too great condescension (as they called it), he answered that by seeming to abase himself he was in reality exalted, and his authority the more firmly established. In fact, his sweetness of temper and affability so won him the affection of the soldiers that there was nothing they would not do to serve him, while at liberty to

[1] Lamprid.

act according to their own inclinations and uninfluenced by traitors. This was sufficiently proved in his wars with Artaxerxes, King of Persia, who became formidable to Romé by his victories.

This new conqueror was a Persian by birth, a man of no family, but possessed of all those talents that were necessary to make a great man. After he had made himself general of the army, he attacked the Parthians, defeated them, and having killed their King Artabanes, overthrew their monarchy, and re-established the government that Alexander of Macedon had abolished. These successes so raised his hopes and expectations that he flattered himself he would recover whatever had belonged to the Kings of Persia, and reconquer all the dominions the Romans had in Asia. As arrogance naturally follows good fortune, this monarch, who was so proud of his victories as to take upon him the title of King of Kings, and to look down upon other potentates as his slaves, wrote to all the neighbouring princes that they should either furnish him with the usual auxiliary troops or prepare for destruction. These threats terrified the weakest and most timid of the princes, but there were some who only yielded after a vigorous resistance; and Alsawad,[1]

[1] Eutych, annales.

one of these Oriental kings, would perhaps have been able himself to have rendered abortive all the vast designs of this brutal conqueror if he had not been betrayed by the very person he thought he had least reason to be apprehensive of. It was his own daughter who was guilty of this horrible perfidiousness. This princess, dazzled with Artaxerxes's triumphs and the extent of his power, was not ashamed to deliver up her father and her country to their bitterest enemy.

Artaxerxes had besieged Alsawad in a fortress, before which he had the mortification of wasting a great deal of time and losing a considerable part of his army without making any progress. He was not, however, discouraged, for the resistance he met with, far from making him raise the siege, made him the more determined to take the fort at all costs. But, as he was not less cunning than brave, he had recourse to craft where his good fortune failed. He knew that Alsawad had a daughter who was marriageable, and not doubting but the princess would with great pleasure listen to a proposal from him, he found means to inform her that, if she would let him know the weakest part of the fortress, he would marry her, and raise her to the throne of Persia. This flattering offer had the desired effect.

Nothing is more calculated to tempt and seduce a

young girl who is nobly born than a splendid marriage. The crown of Persia did not appear to the princess to deserve to be neglected. She gave Artaxerxes a favourable answer by a note shot from an arrow, and, after the terms and conditions had been adjusted by the help of these flying ambassadors, the princess who was as desirous to take the Persian as he was to take the fort, discovered to him a place through which he might make himself master of the castle without danger or trouble.

Artaxerxes immediately made the best use of the intelligence he had got, and meeting with but little resistance, took the place. The princess received, indeed, the reward of her treason, but it was not long before she also underwent the punishment she deserved. The barbarian, soon after he had married her, asked her one day very cunningly how her father used to treat her. The princess, who did not suspect the snare that was laid for her, answered that he had always loved her beyond anything in the world, and had never given her the least cause for displeasure. "Thou art then unworthy to live," replied the Persian in a fury, "for, if thou hast been unnatural enough to betray thy father who loved thee, and from whom, as thou hast confessed, thou didst never receive any cause of displeasure, what fidelity can *I* expect from thee? No," continued he, casting on her

a look of indignation and contempt, "I will not expose myself to thy treachery, and that which thou hast been guilty of deserves the most rigorous chastisement." That instant he commanded the princess to be tied by her hair to a wild horse, which, at full speed, dragged her till she was torn in pieces. Thus was Alsawad revenged upon his undutiful and perfidious daughter, by means of the Persian monarch, his greatest enemy; so true it is that there is no reckoning upon the fidelity of a person who has not been shown proof against temptation.

Artaxerxes having taken the fort in the manner related, conquered all the country bordering upon Mesopotamia, and carried his arms as far as Cappadocia. These rapid victories alarmed Rome. Alexander, by the advice of his council, wrote to the barbarian prince that the Romans were not people who could be easily overcome, which the Orientals had found to their cost under Augustus, Trajan, and many other Emperors; therefore he was not acting over wisely in exposing himself to the same misfortunes. This letter, however, had a quite different effect from what was expected; for the Persian, instead of being intimidated by these threats, pursued his conquests on purpose to let the Romans see he was not afraid of them.

The Emperor being informed of this, prepared for war,

and everything being ready, he set out from Rome, accompanied by the Senate and an infinite number of people, who testified by their tears the affliction they felt at the departure of a prince, who, by his mildness, beneficence, and many other rare and valuable qualities, had so well deserved their esteem.

As soon as the army had arrived at Antioch the Emperor sent a second embassy to Artaxerxes, but to as little purpose as the former. Alexander being then convinced that it was in vain to parley any longer, marched directly towards this haughty enemy, and gained a glorious victory. The news had no sooner reached Rome than the whole city was in the greatest joy imaginable, and it is impossible to describe their satisfaction at his arrival there. He was received in triumph, and all classes of the city went out to meet him with as much zeal and eagerness as if each individual person was to meet his father after a long absence. Rome, they said, was now safe, since she possessed within her walls so inestimable a jewel as Alexander.

The Emperor was extremely sensible of the sincere tokens of affection shown him by the Romans, and distributed large sums of money among the troops and the people. To his extraordinary bounty and generosity he

added all sorts of sports, games, and shows; but the revolt of the Gauls soon interrupted these diversions.

Alexander was mightily provoked that these barbarians who, under the weakest and least warlike Emperors had not dared to stir, should have the assurance to shake off the yoke of obedience in his reign, who had just subdued the Persians, a people who were looked upon as infinitely more formidable. He resolved, therefore, to make an example of them, and for that purpose set out again from Rome with Mamea at the head of a powerful army, leaving the people in great grief. It is said that a Druid met him on the road, and told him his expedition would not be attended with success, for that his soldiers would betray him. It is also reported that an astrologer foretold that he would be killed. These unfortunate predictions did not hinder the Emperor from marching, with the utmost diligence, to Moguntiacum (Maintz). Amongst his legions there was one composed of Pannonians, and commanded by Maximinus, who has been already spoken of. This officer was under the greatest obligations to the Emperor, who had brought him up, and had given him innumerable marks of his esteem; all this kindness, however, made no impression upon the ungrateful wretch, who had formed a design to put the Emperor to death, and took every opportunity of rendering him odious to

the soldiers, often insinuating that it was a shame for troops accustomed to conquer to obey a prince who was entirely governed by a woman, and who had not resolution to fight the enemies of the empire; that instead of going directly against the barbarians, Mamea had prevailed on him to return into the East with her son, and was not ashamed to leave the army without a chief, fleeing in a manner before the enemy.

These seditious discourses had but too great an effect upon the minds of the soldiers, who are generally fond of change, and who, besides, were not over content with Mamea, from whom they never received the least largess or present, though she was immensely rich. They imagined that a new Emperor would be more generous, and that by massacring Alexander they would be entitled to great rewards from whomsoever they should choose in his stead. Thus animated by the perfidious arguments of Maximinus, and by the hopes of a considerable recompense, they resolved to get rid of Mamea and her son. The treacherous Maximinus took advantage of the disposition of the soldiers, and seeing them determined to act conformably to his wishes, detached a band of these Pannonians to Maintz, where the Emperor was. The unexpected arrival of these tumultuous troops without being sent for immediately caused a great consternation.

The Emperor's guards, either intimidated or corrupted, fled, and left their Emperor exposed to the fury of this mutinous cohort. Mamea came out to persuade the rebels to return to their duty, but she had no sooner appeared than the soldiers brutally murdered her, and cut to pieces as many as attempted to defend her.

Alexander, who was in his tent, being informed of this uproar, gave himself up for lost. He had indeed observed military discipline very strictly, but yet was the farthest in the world from cruelty. He was nevertheless always apprehensive that, sooner or later, he should experience the bad consequences of his mother's avarice. In fact, as soon as he perceived the assassins enter his tent, their swords besmeared with his mother's blood, he cried out that Mamea's covetousness had undone him. He promised to distribute among them all the money he had, but nothing could prevail, for they despatched him in a moment; and never was a prince more undeserving of such a fate.

It is not known what became of the Empress Memmia. A modern historian[1] asserts that she had a son by Alexander who died young, but this does not seem sufficiently proved; nor is there any mention made of

[1] Occo. Imperatorum Romanorum numismata.

another wife of Alexander, to whom the medals give the name of Sallustia Barbia Orbiana. There is, however, no doubt but Alexander had three wives. Tristan confounds Memmia with the daughter of Marcianus, as if she were the same person ; but Lampridius distinguishes them too clearly to give room for any such conjecture.

PAULINA,
WIFE OF MAXIMINUS.

ORESTILIA,
WIFE OF GORDIANUS, THE ELDER.

CRISPILLA,
WIFE OF PUPIENUS.

TRANQUILLINA,
WIFE OF GORDIANUS III.

WE differ in opinion from Camerarius, who, in his notes upon the chronology of Nicephorus, asserts that Calpurnia, of the celebrated family of the Pisos, was wife of Maximinus, and that she was a lady of exquisite beauty and virtue. He was led into that mistake by misunderstanding a passage in Trebellius; for it is plain that the above-mentioned historian[1] affirms that Calpurnia was wife of Titus Quartinus, who revolted against Maximinus, as we shall see by the sequel.

The name of Maximinus's wife was for a long time unknown, but it is now the general opinion of learned

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[1] Trebel. Trig. Tyranni.

men that this Empress was called Paulina. This princess possessed beauty and virtue, was of a very beneficent disposition, and inclined to mildness and clemency. She was a great enemy to injustice, and has been much commended for her endeavours to moderate the violence and impetuosity of her husband's temper. Maximinus[1] was born in a small village in Thrace. His father was a Goth, and his mother a Scythian; so that the two wildest and most barbarous nations of the earth were united in his person. He had been a shepherd in his youth. He was of a gigantic size, and incredible things are told of his strength, which was the beginning of his fortune; for, during the rejoicings at Court in honour of the birth of Prince Geta, he gave proofs of such prodigious strength before the Emperor Severus that he imagined such a man would be capable of doing good service in the army, and gave him a company in the guards, whence he rose by degrees to the highest office. As to his temper, manners and extraction, all were barbarous. He was brutal, cruel, covetous, and perfidious, and had all the vices of tyrants.

He served under Severus and Caracalla with great fidelity, but quitted the service when Macrinus seized the

[1] Ammian. Marcel.

empire. He remained unemployed till Heliogabalus dethroned Macrinus, and then offered his service to the new Emperor, but did not meet with such encouragement as he hoped for, nor any of those marks of esteem that Caracalla and Severus had shown him. On the contrary, he conceived a very bad opinion of him from the behaviour of that vicious and depraved Emperor, who, on account of that extraordinary vigour and strength of Maximinus, so much talked of, asked him several very impertinent questions. He accordingly seldom appeared at Court during his reign, but when Alexander came to the throne, he got himself introduced to him.

Alexander, being well acquainted with his merit, gave him a very favourable reception, presented him to the Senate, of which he made him a member, gave him the command of a legion, and afterwards of an army, thus exalting a man who was to be the author of his ruin. These excessive honours increased his ambition, pride, and insolence to a great degree; he had such a confidence in his strength that he imagined himself invincible, and able to undertake what he pleased. But what especially contributed to his pride and haughtiness was the great regard and esteem the Emperor and his mother Mamea had for him; the latter carried this so far as to have thoughts of marrying her daughter Theoclea to

his son, and this would actually have taken place if, as we have observed, Alexander had not, with a good deal of difficulty, dissuaded his mother from her design. This was probably the cause of that secret spleen and resentment that Maximinus ever afterwards conceived against Alexander.

Young Maximus was, without dispute, one of the handsomest men in the world. Everything about him was amiable ;[1] for which reason all the ladies in Rome, of that class that is not very scrupulous, were desirous to have him for a lover. He was magnificent in his apparel, and neglected nothing that could possibly set off his person. He was a great lover of gaiety and pleasures, was no enemy to gallantry, and in a word had every quality that could recommend him to the fair sex, and many there were that sighed for him. It may be taken for granted that the ladies did not admire him the less for his being invested with the sovereign authority, for his father had associated him with himself in the empire, that the Senate and Roman people might be forced to own (as he said) that there never was so beautiful a prince upon the throne. Julia Fadilla was of the number of his admirers, and as she was the most illustrious of

[1] Capitolin. in Maxim.

them, she bade fairest to be mistress of the young Emperor's heart.

She was grand-daughter of Antoninus,[1] and, together with the nobility of her birth, Nature had given her that dazzling beauty that all the princesses of her family were endowed with. Maximinus, the father, who was willing to conceal the obscurity of his own family by a grand alliance, looked upon Fadilla as a person capable of doing honour to his son; and whether the prince's inclinations were conformable to those of his father and the lady, or whether he was desirous to be nearly related to Antoninus, whose name and memory were so much esteemed at Rome, Fadilla was selected to be his partner on the throne. They were solemnly betrothed at Rome, and the prince made the lady the usual presents upon that occasion, which history tells us were magnificent, consisting chiefly of necklaces, bracelets, and sumptuous robes. The troubles that ensued soon after obliged him, however, to quit his mistress, and put off his wedding till his return. But he never had that satisfaction, being involved in the misfortunes his father brought upon himself by his cruelty and avarice, which filled the empire with blood and executions. He put all those to death

[1] Capitolin.

who had been the domestics, friends or councillors of Alexander, as well as those who were particularly acquainted with the lowness and obscurity of his family, and most ungratefully destroyed people who had been of great service to him at the beginning of his career.

He could not endure persons of high quality,[1] because their nobility seemed to reproach him with his own contemptible origin. People of good character were odious to him, because the comparison between their virtues and his vices made him appear in a worse light than he would otherwise have done. As for those who were rich, they were the objects of his most bitter persecutions, because their death enriched him with their spoils; so that, during the reign of this tyrant, nothing was so dangerous as the reputation of being virtuous or wealthy.

Paulina was secretly in the greatest affliction[2] at these cruelties, for, as she was born with quite a different disposition, she bewailed those evils to which she could afford no other remedy than her compassion. She did not doubt but her husband's conduct would bring upon

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[1] Aurel. Victor. Epit. Capitolin. in Maxim.

[2] Ammian. Marcel. lib. 14.

him some terrible misfortune, and that the people and nobles of the empire, being driven to despair by so many vexations, would do their utmost to shake off a yoke that was become intolerable. She, therefore, did all that lay in her power to make him alter his behaviour, and to inspire him with more humane sentiments. Her entreaties and remonstrances sometimes put a stop to his fury, but soon after the tyrant would return to his own natural temper; his barbarity always got the better of her arguments, so that he stained all the provinces with the blood of the most illustrious persons, whom he sacrificed to his rage. After having robbed individuals, he pillaged the cities, and seized all their treasures and revenues, not sparing even the temples, which he plundered and stripped of their ornaments.

These excesses stirred up many powerful people to revolt, and provoked the Osrhoenians, who were the soldiers who had been most faithful to Alexander, and who extremely regretted his death. They were a troop who had been commanded by Titus Quartinus, who had been deprived of that employment by Maximinus, because Alexander had had an extraordinary regard for him. The disgrace of their general irritating them more and more against Maximinus, they accordingly proclaimed Quartinus Emperor, clothed him with the imperial robes,

and paid him royal honours. Nobody was[1] more capable of maintaining this dignity, for he was nobly descended, and had acquired a very great reputation. But, whether it was that he could not reconcile himself to such a breach of his duty, or that he was doubtful of the success of it, he refused the empire, till, being compelled by the troops who had served under him in Syria, he resolved to try his fortune. What most of all prevailed upon him was the treacherous persuasion of his ancient friend Macedo, who was the principal author of the conspiracy, and who was hatching the blackest treason that could enter into the heart of man. For one day, when the unfortunate Quartinus was sleeping with great tranquility in his tent, the infamous Macedo assassinated him, and had the brutality to cut off his head and carry it to Maximinus, in the hope of being rewarded for an action that deserved the most rigorous punishment. He did not, however, receive for his baseness the recompense he expected. The Emperor was, indeed, very well pleased with the affair, as he was glad to get rid of a formidable enemy, but, whatever benefit people receive from the treason, the traitor is sure to be detested; Macedo was put to death by order of

[1] Herodian. lib. 7. Trebel. Pollio. 30. Tyr.

Maximinus, who was informed that he himself was the author of the conspiracy, and the person who had prevailed on Quartinus to undertake it. It is said that Calpurnia, Quartinus's wife, acquainted the Emperor with this, and that her husband had engaged in the plot contrary to her advice. History gives her an extraordinary character. She was of the celebrated family of the Pisos, remarkable in Rome for its antiquity and the many eminent men with which it had furnished the republic. Her illustrious birth was not, however, so great an honour to her as her virtues, especially the regard she paid to the memory of her husband, to which she dedicated the remainder of her life, and passed the rest of her days in widowhood with so much modesty and reserve that the regularity of her conduct was looked upon[1] as a rare example of prudence and discretion, and statues were erected to her honour.

This estimable lady had a silver basin of one hundred pounds weight, upon which were engraven the famous exploits of her ancestors.

The miscarriage of the several conspiracies that were formed against Maximinus made him naturally more proud and cruel. He allowed full scope to the ferocity

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[1] Trebel. Pollio. 30. Tyran.

of his nature, so that rivers of blood ran all over the provinces. He so encouraged informers and slanderers that nothing was heard of but complaints and accusations. The high roads were filled with unfortunate wretches, who were dragged into Germany, where the Emperor then was, and who had been falsely accused of crimes, for which they were sure to suffer death if they had any possessions, for their property was always confiscated by the Emperor. No excuses or pleas of justification were listened to; they were condemned without proof, and punished without reason. Never did Rome groan under a more cruel scourge. Maximinus, incapable of remorse or compassion, thought only of gratifying his insatiable avarice, without fearing the dreadful consequences of his tyrannical behaviour, having taken it into his head that there was nobody so bold as not to tremble at the force of his arm. He did not reflect that lions, tigers, and elephants are subdued in spite of their great strength, as a buffoon told him one day in the amphitheatre. This would infallibly have cost him his life if the Emperor had understood Latin well enough to have comprehended the meaning of it, for he was not a man to permit anybody to give him advice. The words of the buffoon were these:

Et qui ab uno non potest occidi
A multis occiditur.
Elephas grandis est, et occiditur;

Leo fortis est, et occiditur ;
Tigris fortis est, et occiditur ;
Cave multos, si singulos non times.

The Empress Paulina sadly experienced the brutality of his nature, for as she seized every opportunity to inspire him, if possible, with some sentiments of humanity, she represented to him the danger to which he exposed himself; but he was so provoked at her importunate warnings that he resolved to get her out of the way, and accordingly poisoned her. This princess was of so beneficent a disposition[1] that she was extremely regretted. The Senate did not fail to grant her the honour of immortality, for though she had but little influence over her barbarous husband, she had contrived to avert a great deal of bloodshed.

The death of Paulina made Fadilla very impatient for the return of the young prince, to whom she was betrothed. She was greatly vexed to see her hopes retarded by the absence of him who was to raise her to the empire, but her uneasiness would have been much greater if she had known that his absence was voluntary, and that it proceeded from his indifference. For, whatever argument the Emperor made use of to persuade his son to go to Rome, where he said his presence was necessary to keep the

[1] Zonar. Trist. Com. Hist.

people in awe, he would not quit[1] his father, so that his passion for the princess was not so violent as he pretended to her. But though he could not prevail upon himself to leave Germany from motives of love, he ought to have done it at least for the sake of his interest, and he had soon reason to be convinced that the Emperor was in the right when he pressed him so much to go to Rome, where he might have hindered what happened there soon after, which cost him his life and the empire. The revolt began in Africa, which province was worn out by the oppressions of the commissioner whom Maximinus had sent thither, and who exercised his authority as those of his profession are wont to do—that is to say, with the utmost severity. The people determined, therefore, to shake off this tyrannical yoke, which was no longer supportable, and choose themselves another master.

Gordianus, pro-consul of Africa, seemed a fit person to fill the throne. He was a venerable old man, grown grey in the service and in the exercise of the highest offices, in which he had acquitted himself with honour. He was son of Metius Marullus, of the celebrated family of the Gracchi, and of Ulpia Gordiana, descended from Trajan ; but if[2] he was illustrious by his birth, he

[1] Capitolin. in Maxim.

[2] Capitolin. in Gordianos tres.

was not less so on account of his great actions. He had been twice consul, and that dignity was, in a manner, hereditary in his family; he had afterwards held the government of Africa, where he distinguished himself by his conduct, his magnificence, and the noble use he made of his riches. He married Fabia Orestilia, daughter of Annius Verus, who, in all probability, died before Gordianus came to the throne. She was niece of Antoninus, and consequently related to Fadilla. They had a daughter and a son; Metia, the former, was married to Junius Balbus (who had been consul), and Marcus Antoninus Gordianus, the son, declared August along with his father, under whom he served as lieutenant-general in Africa. Gordianus, the father, was then very old, being nearly eighty years of age, but yet was reckoned a man fit for service and capable of disputing the empire with Maximinus. The people, then, who conducted this affair, went to Gordianus in the night, surrounded his bed, and with their drawn swords in their hands, told him they came to force the empire upon him.

Gordianus was alarmed at this proposal, and thought they were laying a snare for him. He pleaded his age, and reminded them of the fidelity they owed the Emperor, the danger to which they exposed themselves,

and said everything he could think of to make them desist from their design, but his remonstrances only served to increase their obstinacy; they assured him that, whatever danger the undertaking might be attended with, they were ready to share it with him, and, seeing that he still refused to accept the empire, they told him that he must either consent or prepare for death. This alternative determined him to comply with their request; he preferred to run the risk of a remote evil, than meet with certain and immediate destruction. He suffered himself, therefore, to be invested with the purple robe, and after having associated his son with him in the government, he set out for Carthage with all the pomp and splendour of an Emperor upon his march. The Senate confirmed what was done in Africa, for, as the members were either relations or friends of Gordianus, and mortally hated Maximinus, who exercised his cruelties as much at Rome as in the provinces, they declared the Gordiani August, and Maximinus the enemy of the State.

Maximinus was informed of all this in Germany, and the news disconcerted him so much that he tore his robes, threw himself upon the ground, and drew his sword, as if it had been in his power to kill all the senators. He also made an attempt to kill his son, because he imagined that if he had followed his advice

and had gone to Rome, his presence would have intimidated the senators. As soon as his anger began to cool, and he recovered the use of his reason, he assembled his troops, and took the road to Rome, fully resolved to exterminate the Senate, who had set a price upon his head in the decree that was issued against him, and of which he had found the means to procure a copy. He had every reason to expect good success, when he heard that the two Gordiani were put to death; for Capelianus, who commanded the troops in Mauretania, and who was attached to the interests of Maximinus, being told of the election of Gordianus, whom he hated, marched to attack him. Gordianus, the son, went out of Carthage to meet him. This young prince, having but little experience, was entirely defeated, and lost his life. The old man was so stricken with grief at the loss of his son and colleague, and with the apprehension of falling into the hands of his enemy, that he strangled himself with his girdle.

The death of these two Emperors threw Rome into the utmost consternation. The Senate, after the step they had taken, thought they could not draw back; they deliberated about choosing some other person proper to oppose Maximinus, and at last selected Balbinus and Pupienus, two senators who were remarkable for their merit and experience, as well in military as civil affairs.

Pupienus had married Quintia Crispilla, a lady of great resolution.[1] History does not mention her family and her husband's reign was so short that she was scarce known; but one of her actions, represented on a medal, gives us a great idea of her courage. It does not appear that she ever received the title of August any more than her husband; so it is probable that the election of these two Emperors was so precipitate that the Senate had not time to confer upon them the honours that had always been given to those who were invested with the sovereign authority.

The excellent qualities of Balbinus and Pupienus justified the choice of the Senate, but did not please the people, who insisted upon their electing one of Gordianus's family, and threatened to massacre those whom the Senate had proclaimed, if that satisfaction was refused them. Though the senators saw their authority attacked by this sedition, they were so unwilling to fill the city with trouble and confusion that they carried young Gordianus, about twelve years of age, into the Capitol, declared him Cæsar, put on him the imperial robes, and, by bestowing upon this third member of the family the title of August, contented the people. Some historians inform us that he

[1] Menestrier.

was son to Gordianus the second, but the opinion of those who assert that he was son of Metia Faustina, daughter of the old Gordianus, and of Junius Balbus, has been more generally received.

After this election the new Emperors prepared for war. Balbinus remained at Rome to take care of domestic affairs, and Pupienus went to Ravenna to meet Maximinus, who had already entered Italy, and who, having heard what had taken place at Rome, flattered himself with no less than the pleasure of sacrificing the whole Senate to his resentment ; but his cruelty drew on him his destruction, for, coming before Aquileia, which had shut its gates against him, and not being able to gain admittance, either by threats, promises, or artifices, he resolved to storm the town, and to put all the soldiers and inhabitants to the sword.

This bloody design exasperated the garrison beyond measure, and made them resolve to defend themselves to the last extremity. The townspeople imitated their zeal, and showed a courage and resolution nothing inferior to that of the soldiers ; and even the women were ready to hazard their lives to save the place. Maximinus, then, met with such resistance as made him mad with rage. He renewed the attack several times, but was always beaten back with great loss. It was upon this occasion

that the women of Aquileia gave an instance of their courage that has been so much talked of and commended; for, the cords belonging to the machines being worn out, they all cut off their hair to supply the defect. There is great reason to believe that the Empress Crispilla, wife of Pupienus, who probably accompanied her husband thither, set an example to the rest in this affair. The Senate, to perpetuate the generosity of these heroines, built a temple, which they dedicated to Venus, and caused a medal to be struck in honour of Quintia Crispilla, who is there represented as a woman with her hair cut close off.

Maximinus, not being able to take the town, vented his fury upon the officers and soldiers of his army, whom he loaded with reproaches that were as impolitic as they were unjust, and which did not fail to provoke them in the highest degree. Seeing themselves, therefore, so ill rewarded for all their pains, they resolved to get rid of the discomforts of this tedious and troublesome siege, and at the same time secure themselves against the ill-treatment of Maximinus, who was hated and forsaken by all the world. They entered his tent when he was asleep, and massacred both him and his son.

Pupienus was so pleased to see himself delivered from this formidable enemy that he immediately despatched a courier to Balbinus with a letter, accompanied with the

usual ceremonies.[1] Never was news received with so much pleasure, which was testified by all sorts of rejoicings, and by the hecatomb which the Emperor Balbinus offered in gratitude to the gods. Pupienus arrived soon afterwards at Rome, and was welcomed by the acclamations of the Senate and people, especially the former, who, by honouring the Emperor Pupienus, intended to vindicate and applaud their having elected him ; and some of them, in the transports of their joy, happened to draw a comparison between Emperors chosen by the Senate, and such as had been appointed by the stupid and ignorant soldiers (as they called them). This proved fatal to the two princes ; for the Prætorians, not being able to endure Emperors who were elected contrary to their inclinations, brutally assassinated them in the palace.

This tragical affair filled Rome with mourning. Everybody was in the greatest affliction, except Fadilla, who looked upon these two princes as persons who had caused the destruction of the Maximins. But a new admirer soon banished from her heart the image of young Maximus. Toxotius

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[1] When the messengers carried good news, the parcel that contained the letters, as well as the heads of their spears, was adorned with laurel ; but when bad, with black feathers.

was a senator of a noble family,[1] remarkable in Rome for his accomplishments and many good qualities, especially for the works that he had composed in verse, and which were well received by the public. Fadilla found in him merit enough to make her forget that of young Maximus. Toxotius, as well as herself, was descended from Antoninus, and, though he had not an empire to offer her, he held a very considerable rank in Rome. This marriage was accordingly celebrated, and Fadilla had the satisfaction of adorning herself with the superb ornaments and magnificent robes that Maximus had presented her with when he was betrothed to her.

The massacre of the two Emperors would have been attended with bad consequences if the Prætorians who murdered them had not given out, to appease the people, that they did it with no other view than to secure the empire to young Gordianus, whom they at the same time presented to them, having conducted him from the camp.[2] At the sight of the prince, the misfortune of his colleagues was forgotten, and he was declared sole Emperor; and the Senate, whose authority had been used to yield to that of the troops, were forced to confirm

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[1] Capitolin. in Maxim. junior.

[2] Herodian. lib. 8. Capitolin.

the election. Gordianus took possession of his new dignity under unfortunate presages; for that very day there was so total an eclipse of the sun that people were obliged to light torches in order to go about their business and distinguish each other. This was reckoned a sure prognostic of the shortness of his reign, and the event verified these conjectures, to the great regret of all classes in the city, who loved this prince excessively; and certainly he deserved their affection. He was extraordinarily handsome, of a sweet and amiable countenance, and most agreeable humour: he wanted nothing, in short, but a few more years. His mother had, by I know not what false policy or blind indulgence, brought him up with eunuchs and freedmen, who had infused into him their corrupt sentiments, and at whose instigation he had done some very bad things. But Gordianus soon met with better advice and example in Misitheus, whose daughter he married. This person was in high esteem at Rome for the gravity of his manners and prudent conduct, so that he had very justly acquired the reputation of a great man. He had a daughter called Turia Sabina Tranquillina, who had inherited her father's good qualities. In her were united the greatest beauty and strictest virtue,[1] which recommended her to the

[1] Eutrop.

Emperor's good graces. He married her at Rome,[1] and the people, who were extremely fond of Gordianus, celebrated his nuptials with all the rejoicings and magnificence that could be thought of. Gordianus might have made a more distinguished alliance, but not a more profitable one; for Misitheus was possessed of such eminent talents for important affairs that things soon put on another appearance; he corrected many abuses that had crept in since the death of Alexander Severus, and made so good a use of the authority that his offices bestowed upon him that the Senate decreed him the glorious title of Guardian of the State.

Tranquillina, on her part, by the regularity of her behaviour and excellent endowments, proved herself worthy of the high rank to which Gordianus had exalted her. Her life was innocent, and exempt from all suspicion of vice, free from pride and haughtiness, and she made no other use of her power than to embrace, and even seek after, opportunities of doing good. The ladies of Rome had such affection for her that they erected a statue to her honour, with an inscription that showed how much she was valued and beloved. The Senate made her August, and the

[1] Tristan. Comment. histor.

provinces strove with each other which should excel in the glorious monuments they erected to show the perfect esteem they had for this illustrious Empress.

She had scarcely begun to taste the first sweets of her happy condition when the revolt of the Persians interrupted her felicity by depriving her of the company of her husband. This filled her with terrors and anxieties; for Sapor, King of Persia, made dreadful havoc wherever he went, so that the Empress felt he was no enemy to be despised. Artaxerxes, his father, when he left him the kingdom, had also bequeathed him his bloody and tyrannical disposition. He was of gigantic stature, of a furious and implacable temper, and one of the least torments that he inflicted upon those he had a mind to punish was to flay them alive. Gordianus, being informed of Sapor's acts of hostility, opened the Temple of Janus, declared war against the Persian with the usual ceremonies, and after having made the necessary preparations, marched against the barbarians, under the conduct of his father-in-law. His expedition was attended with success, for he soon retook the fortresses that Sapor had made himself master of, and put the tyrant to flight, pursuing him into his own territories. But the death of Misitheus was the conclusion of his prosperity. Whether the fatigues of the war had impaired the health of this incomparable

man, or whether it was that his time was come, he found himself taken very ill of a flux. This unlucky accident greatly alarmed the Emperor. He sent for the most skilful physicians, who ordered such remedies as they thought proper, and which probably would have been effectual if a perfidious wretch had not found means tc baffle them. Among the officers of the army there was an Arabian named Philip, who, besides that he did not love Misitheus, eagerly desired his post of præfect of the Prætorians. He was a man of very obscure family, but had not the less ambition on that account, and was capable of the greatest crimes to compass his ends. Misitheus's sickness offered him a fair opportunity of advancing his fortune, and as he was not in the least mistrusted, they were not upon their guard against his attempts, so that Misitheus fell a victim to them; for Philip having found means to convey poison into the medicines, the general died. Gordianus was left in a deplorable situation ; as he knew nothing of Philip's being the cause of his father-in-law's death, and had no officer so capable of filling the vacancy as he, he gave this treacherous Arabian the place, who, abusing the Emperor's goodness and the confidence he put in him, made use of his authority to bring about the ruin of his benefactor. In fact, as ambition seldom knows any

bounds, he had no sooner attained to what he was so greedy of but he wanted to be Emperor, and laboured to destroy the person who had exalted him. Sometimes he uttered seditious speeches against Gordianus, whom he treated as a child, incapable of governing the empire and conducting the armies; at other times he maliciously contrived subjects and occasions for a revolt, by letting the soldiers want provisions, and then throwing the blame upon the Emperor. In short, he practised so many stratagems that he got Gordianus to make him his partner in the empire. His pride was not yet satisfied, for not content with sharing the throne with Gordianus, he thought it beneath him to have the Emperor for his colleague, and, with horrible ingratitude, massacred him on the borders of Persia. Thus perished miserably this young prince, whose virtues had made him so dear to the Romans. The soldiers, whom Philip was not able to corrupt, regretted their Emperor extremely, and erected a magnificent tomb in honour of him, which showed his merit, and the detestable character of his murderer. Of all those who were concerned in this assassination not one of them died a natural death. It is even credibly reported that they either killed themselves or were killed with the same swords they made use of when they put their Emperor to death.

MARCIA OTACILIA SEVERA,

WIFE OF PHILIP.

HITHERTO all the Empresses had been heathens, but in Otacilia we find a Christian princess. She is one of those of whom least mention is made in history; nor is it certainly known whether she was an Arabian, as well as her husband, or a Roman lady, as seems probable by her name. Her medals give her a serious countenance, a modest air, and a tolerable share of beauty. She had the good fortune to be instructed in the Christian religion,[1] but had not so much imbibed its maxims as to be exempt from ambition, or to be hindered from taking part in the crimes and unjust projects of her husband.

Otacilia married Julius Philippus, an Arabian, a man of very obscure family. His father was chief of a band of robbers, but he,[2] thinking his father's trade a very dangerous one, imagined he could do better for himself by turning soldier. He was handsome in person, had a masculine and warlike air,[3] but was rude and unpolished

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[1] Chron. Alex. Euseb. Hist. lib. 6.

[2] Aurel. Victor.

[3] Tristan. Comment.

to the last degree, and, though he disliked his father's profession, he had all the inclinations and vices of it. He was audacious, insolent, and perfidious, having no sense of favours received nor gratitude towards his benefactors. He was ambitious beyond measure, and so forgetful of the meanness of his birth that the higher he was raised the less he was satisfied. Dignities, that might be imagined sufficient to content the proudest of mortals, only served to make him desirous of more. He was, besides, very unsteady and fickle, and lacked thoughtfulness, though capable of reasoning with great soundness. His behaviour was so odd, even after he became Emperor, that he would frequently set up a loud laugh upon occasions where seriousness and gravity were most required, which showed the levity of his mind. He performed his duty so well when a common soldier that he was thought deserving of the highest military posts. It is, however, certain that he had more reputation than merit, for he often wanted resolution and courage where it was necessary, and, in fact, lost the empire by that means. It is generally taken for granted that he was a Christian (however unworthy he was of that glorious name),[1] nor can we question it, after all the proofs that

[1] Euseb. Hist. lib. 6. Oros. lib. 7. Nicephor. lib. 5. Tillemont.

the most learned historians, ancient as well as modern, furnish us with, and we shall see that he signalised the beginning of his reign by an instance of great Christian humility.

It is not well known what sort of life Otacilia led before her husband came to the throne, but in all probability she conducted herself prudently and without reproach. She had a daughter, whose name we are not acquainted with, who was married to Severianus, an officer not much known at that time, but afterwards general of the army in Macedonia, an office he was by no means fit for.

Philip had already attained to power and authority when Maximinus and the Gordiani disputed the empire; and it was during these troubles that his wife Otacilia was brought to bed of a son, who was called after his father. Otacilia took the greatest care of his education; she instructed him in her own religion, and inspired him with sentiments conformable to it,[1] to which may be attributed that modesty and reserve which he was always remarkable for, notwithstanding the impetuosity to which youth is subject, except we prefer to attribute it to the natural gloominess of his temper. However this may be, he was during his whole life of such a melancholy

[1] Oros. lib. 7. Baron. ad an. 249.

disposition that he was never known to laugh upon any occasion whatsoever.

If Otacilia infused into her son the maxims of Christianity, she did not follow them very strictly herself; for she was ever ready to second the ambitious views of her husband, and had her share in all the crimes upon which he built up his fortune, even the murder by which he obtained the throne.

As soon as Philip had obtained considerable and important employments, he conceived strong hopes of something higher; for the obscurity of his birth did not serve as a counterpoise to his pride. It was certainly carrying his expectations very high,[1] but nothing hindered him from hoping, however wild and extravagant his pretensions were. People as low and obscure as he had been Emperors, and the throne was actually filled by a young prince whose only support was the wisdom and experience of his father-in-law—a poor support, considering how the Prætorians took upon themselves to dispose of the empire, according to their own whims and fancies.

Philip's professing a religion that prohibits all crimes and injustice did not hinder him from pursuing such measures as he thought would promote his temporal

[1] Capitolin. in Gord. 3.

interests. His ardent desire of sovereign power got so much the better of his conscience that he was hardened against all scruples and remorse; and, as he only consulted his ambition, he was resolved to open himself a door to the empire by treason and murder.

He therefore put Gordianus to death on the confines of Persia, and there was no sort of artifice that he did not make use of to conceal this horrid act. He wrote to the Senate that, the Emperor having died of sickness, the legions had chosen him. He spoke of Gordianus with the greatest respect, ranked him among the gods, and procured him a place in Heaven to make him amends for what he had deprived him of on earth. The Senate, who had neither authority nor courage enough to contradict the army, confirmed the election, declared him August, and decreed the same title to Otacilia. His first care was to make peace with the Persians, and he was so much in haste to get to Rome that he even consented to terms that were far from being honourable; so, having put an end to the war, he set out directly with the Empress.

Whatever precautions they had taken to keep the people in ignorance of the crime they were guilty of, they were, nevertheless, suspected. They arrived at Antioch towards the end of Lent, and as there were a great number of Christians in that town, they were desirous of

giving a proof of their religion, by going to church and joining in the service that was performed on Easter-eve. Babylas, the Bishop of Antioch (remarkable for his courage and sanctity, and a most zealous upholder of the discipline of the Church) being informed of what had taken place in Persia, and hearing that the Emperor and Empress were just at the door, went out to meet them; and, far from being overawed by the presence of the master of the world, stopped the Emperor, and hindered him from advancing,[1] representing to him, with modest but noble liberty of speech, that it was not proper he should enter into the holy place with hands that were besmeared with the blood of his Emperor and benefactor; that, after having committed so heinous a crime, he could not take part in those sacred rites till he had expiated his guilt by performing a suitable penance. Nor was the Empress exempted from the penalty, for neither her sex, dignity, nor the lustre which surrounds the supreme authority were thought by this holy prelate sufficient reason for escaping the rigour of the Church.

Otacilia had virtue enough to sacrifice her grandeur to her duty upon this occasion. She submitted, and showed an edifying example of humility by undergoing,

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[1] Chrysost. adv. gent. Nicephor. Cal. lib. 5. c. 25.

along with the other penitent women, whatever the Bishop of Antioch required of her. The Emperor also, doing the same, received absolution.

This action made a great noise; it edified and rejoiced all those who had the interest of religion at heart. Origen, who lived at that time, wrote the Empress a letter full of pious instructions becoming an apostle,[1] and Saint Hippolytus, who was then one of the greatest bishops in the Church, addressed to her an exhortation worthy of his zeal.

After the Empress had given, at Antioch, so convincing a proof of her Christianity, she accompanied her husband to Rome, where, shortly after their arrival, the thousandth year of its foundation was celebrated with great rejoicings. Philip entertained the people with several kinds of wild beast fights, and upon this occasion made use of all those that had been destined for Gordianus's triumph. The Emperor did not, however, go to the Capitol to sacrifice as usual, which was attributed to his religion; but if he was a Christian, he was but a very imperfect one. He assisted at all the shows in the amphitheatre, and that with so much good humour that his son by no means approved of it; for Philip bursting out into fits of

[1] Euseb. lib. 6. Vincen. Lirin. lib. 1.

laughter one day[1] in the midst of the diversions, the young prince, thinking this very indecent in an Emperor, turned away his head and frowned, to show his dislike at it.

Otacilia did not scruple to indulge herself in many things that without doubt she would never have done if she had been more zealous for the religion she professed. Flattery, however, was not wanting to celebrate her praises, as well as those of many of her predecessors who were at least as unworthy of them. We find there were medals struck in honour of her with very pompous inscriptions and encomiums.

These rejoicings ended in an unfortunate accident, for Pompey's theatre took fire, and that superb edifice was reduced to ashes. This afflicted the Emperor extremely, but the account which he received soon after of the revolt of several of the provinces was a more painful and interesting subject of vexation.

In the first year of his reign he gave his son the title of August; and, the better to establish himself on the throne, he gave his brother Priscus the command of the troops in Syria, and made Severianus, his son-in-law, general of the armies in Mœsia and Macedonia. These

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[1] Aurel. Vict.

offices were above the merit and capacity of the two officers. Priscus made so bad a use of his power that the Syrians rebelled, and chose for Emperor Iotapianus, who gave out that he was nearly related to Alexander; and Severianus behaved so ill in his command that the troops in Mœsia revolted, and invested with the purple Marinus, a person of very obscure birth and small experience. These two rebellions alarmed the Emperor, but he had about him some very skilful generals, who encouraged him by affirming that Marinus was incapable of conducting so important an enterprise, and consequently that this revolt would come to nothing. In fact, it happened just so; for Marinus was massacred by the same persons who had raised him up, and received the punishment due to usurpers.

But, as Philip knew that Severianus had not experience or skill sufficient to keep the troops and the province which he had been entrusted with in obedience, he resolved to send Decius thither to chastise the authors of the revolt, that this example of severity might intimidate such as were inclined to sedition.

Decius refused this post at first, but was forced to yield to the positive command of Philip, who little imagined that he was advancing a person destined by Providence to be the avenger of Gordianus's death. Decius

set out, then, much against his inclinations, and, before he arrived at the army, the motives of his journey were known. The rebels, being well acquainted with his character, and knowing him to be inexorable, thought they had no better method of obtaining his favour than by declaring for him, and expiating their guilt by making him Emperor, who came to punish them with death. Decius, whether through fear or pretending great humility, refused the purple; but seeing that they threatened to kill him if he made any further resistance, suffered himself to be proclaimed Emperor.

Philip was thunderstruck when he had an account of this election. He knew full well the valour and capacity of this new usurper, and was very sensible that the revolt which he was conducting was infinitely more dangerous than that which he was sent to put down. Decius, indeed, excused himself on account of his having been compelled to accept the imperial dignity, and promised to give it up as soon as he should arrive at Rome, but Philip looked upon this as mere artifice, and thought that it was only a snare that his enemy was laying for him, to lull him asleep and surprise him, and marched directly to give him battle. The quarrel was soon decided. Philip was killed at Verona by the very soldiers who had encouraged his revolt against

Gordianus; so that he who drew the sword to commit a horrid murder, perished in like manner by the sword.

The Empress Otacilia was at Rome, waiting with the utmost impatience the issue of this war. The reputation of Decius was sufficient reason for her dreading the consequences of it, nor were her apprehensions without foundation. She was in the greatest affliction when she heard that Philip was dead, which she looked upon as the melancholy forerunner of her son's destruction, so that her grief on account of the evils she dreaded was as great as for those which she actually suffered. In fact, she had all the reason in the world to fear that Decius would sacrifice young Philip to the fortune of his own children, and assure the empire to them at the expense of her son's life. Being, therefore, terrified with these reflections and the approach of Decius, she took refuge in the camp of the Prætorians, and put her son under their protection. But the camp was no place of safety for her, for the soldiers, hearing that Decius had defeated Philip and was proclaimed Emperor, massacred the young prince in the arms of his mother, in order to entitle themselves to the favour of their new master. Otacilia was spared,[1] because her life was of no consequence, for she was in no condition to intrigue.

[1] Vaillant.

If this Empress was really a Christian, the overthrow of all her fortunes furnished her with a fair opportunity of practising that resignation which Christianity teaches. History does not inform us what became of her, but if she lived a little longer she must have seen Decius forced to abandon to another usurper the throne that he had deprived her husband of, and from which Philip had precipitated Gordianus. And the destruction of all these princes must have taught her that riches and honours seldom continue long in families that have acquired them by wicked actions.

HERENNIA ETRUSCILLA,

WIFE OF DECIUS.

For a long time it was not known that Etruscilla was wife to Decius; some historians would needs have it that he was married to Orbiana, but it is generally taken for granted that Orbiana was the wife of Hostilianus, his son, and that Etruscilla was his. No mention is made of her family or country. Her medals give her but little beauty to boast of; they represent her with small eyes, a disagreeable countenance[1] and a mean air. She had a great many children before she came to the throne. Together with the title of August, all the honours that were usually given to the Empresses were conferred upon her; but she did not enjoy them long, for she owed them to the revolt of her husband, and the glory of bad actions is but of short duration.

Decius was born in a village in Pannonia, and served with great reputation under Maximinus and other Emperors. He was a man capable of doing good service, as well in peace as in war, and had a great many good

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[1] Vaillant.

qualities. But he eclipsed the merit of them by that furious barbarity with which he signalised the beginning of his reign; for never did Emperor spill the blood of Christians with so much brutality.

He had scarcely taken possession of the empire than he had to defend it against an irruption of the Scythians, who spread terror though all the neighbouring provinces. The Emperor sent his son Decius into Thrace to put a stop to the rapid march of the barbarians, but though this prince wanted neither resolution nor skill, he saw the town of Philippopolis taken before his face, where a very large number of people were put to the sword. This misfortune obliged the Emperor to go and command the army in person, and in fact, his presence soon changed the situation of affairs.[1] He defeated the Scythians and the other barbarian nations who had joined them, took away from them all they had conquered, and obliged them to abandon all the country they had taken possession of. This success made him hope for still greater, and resolving to take advantage of the consternation his enemies were in, he was determined utterly to extirpate them.

Trebonianus Gallus, Governor of Mœsia, put this design

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[1] Ammian. Marcel. lib. 31.

into his head at the very time when he was hatching a scheme for taking possession of the throne. As he had known it filled by persons who had as little right to it as himself, he thought he might expect the same good fortune. Decius, without knowing it, was labouring to promote the designs of this ambitious man; for, being deceived by the false marks of zeal and affection shown him by Gallus, he was contriving with him the means of destroying the Scythians, not dreaming that this perfidious wretch was at that instant carrying on a secret correspondence with the barbarians to ruin the Roman army. The Emperor fell a victim to this treason, for, the enemy advancing to fight him, he charged them so briskly that he killed a great number of them. But Gallus had given the barbarians notice to draw up their troops near a morass not far off, and then told the Emperor that he could never have a better opportunity of destroying them—that he had nothing to do but to pursue the Scythians towards the morass, and it would not be possible for them to escape. The Emperor, forgetting his usual prudence upon this occasion, took his advice, and intending to drive the enemy into the bog became so entangled in it himself that he was either smothered in the mud,[1] or else was so exposed to the

[1] Victor. Epit. Zosim. Lactant. de Mortib. Persec.

arrows of the enemy, who were concealed, that they killed him. Thus perished this Emperor, whose memory will be ever detested on account of his cruelty to the Christians; and with him fell all the honours and fortunes of Etruscilla.

HOSTILIA SEVERA,
WIFE OF GALLUS.
ETRUSCILLA,
WIFE OF VOLUSIANUS.
ORBIANA,
WIFE OF HOSTILIANUS.

There is so much obscurity in the history of those Emperors who reigned from Philip to Valerianus that scarcely anything certain can be advanced concerning them. What one author asserts is contradicted by another, and there is scarcely any fact in which they agree. We have seen by what perfidy Gallus came to the throne. History gives him for a wife Hostilia Severa, and yet says nothing of her. If it be of her that the chronicles of Alexander speak, when they mention the fury of an Empress who cut her husband's throat, we cannot entertain a very advantageous opinion of her. This, however, does not tally with the account we have of Gallus's death in another manner; for we find that this prince was massacred, together with Volusianus, his son, at Terni, whither he had gone to fight Æmilianus.

Volusianus, according to the opinion of a great many, married Herennia Etruscilla, daughter of the Empress of that name, and of Decius. They affirm that Gallus made this match, and at the same time adopted Hostilianus, his daughter-in-law's brother, that he might not be reckoned capable of so black an action as that of having caused Decius and his army to perish. But this artifice did not exempt him from the odium of that horrid crime, nor from the punishment that was due to it. Æmilianus revenged Decius by taking up arms against Gallus, which revolt also met with its deserts, for the soldiers rebelled and assassinated Æmilianus.

We have already observed that Hostilianus's wife was Barbia Orbiana. There are medals that represent that Emperor on one side, and on the other Orbiana, who seems to have been rather handsome than otherwise; this is sufficient to justify the assertion of those who deny that she was wife to Decius, as some will have it. It is true that many imagine there were two Empresses of that name, one of whom was wife to Decius, and the other of Hostilianus, who, they say, was only son-in-law to Decius; but there are so many difficulties in this, and so little probability, that I do not see how we can admit it without being much confused. Hostilianus died of the plague at Rome, after Decius's death.

MARINIANA,
WIFE OF VALERIANUS.

SALONINA,
WIFE OF GALLIENUS.

PIPARA,
CONCUBINE OF GALLIENUS.

ZENOBIA,
WIFE OF ODENATUS.

VICTORIA,
WIFE OF THE TYRANT VICTORINUS.

The ladies are far from being incapable of heroism: there are many instances of women combining with virtue and sweetness of temper a masculine courage, great intrepidity, and other warlike qualities, which sufficiently proves that great talents are common to both sexes. There are numerous authors who have made it their business to celebrate the praises of such heroines as have acquired immortal honour by their great actions; but it may be affirmed that Zenobia and Victoria hold the first rank among such as were most distinguished and most remarkable. We shall find them an honour to

the age in which they lived, by the rare and uncommon abilities which enabled them to govern and defend the empire, to the shame of all those Emperors who dishonoured their dignity by their voluptuous and effeminate lives; whilst these princesses, by the most glorious military exploits and consummate prudence, have deserved an everlasting esteem and reputation.

Æmilianus having been massacred, the soldiers proclaimed Valerianus Emperor, who commanded the army of Gallus. This general had acquitted himself with great honour in several important military posts, which, besides his being of noble birth, seemed to pave the way for him to the throne, of which everybody thought him worthy. He possessed all the qualifications necessary to form a great man. He was courteous and polite in his manners, had an honest, upright heart and vast experience in the art of war. He was mild, judicious, grave, an enemy to vice; and, in person, he was tall and well made, with a majestic air and a robust and excellent constitution. For all these reasons his election was so universally approved of that it looked as if the votes of all classes in the city and the army had been collected for that purpose.

Valerianus had two wives. The name of the first, who was mother to Gallienus, is not known; the second was

called Mariniana, by whom he had young Valerianus. Many people have thought that she was daughter to Carvilius Marinus, who in the reign of Philip commanded the army in Pannonia. Her medals give her a grave and serious air, and it is conjectured that Valerianus made choice of her for that reason, hoping that her behaviour would be conformable to her physiognomy.

Valerianus took great care of his children's education, but his expectations were not altogether fulfilled, so true it is that nature and constitution often get the better of instruction and example. Gallienus possessed, indeed, all the good qualities that a prince ought to have. He was extraordinarily handsome, affable, generous, liberal, fond of doing good offices, never refusing what was requested of him without showing visible concern in his countenance, which consoled those whom it was not in his power to gratify. He had a considerable share of agreeable wit, and composed well both in prose and verse; he understood perfectly the art of war, and, upon occasion, could perform the duty of a soldier as well as that of a general. But, on the other hand, he had great vices that sullied and eclipsed all his virtues. He was so revengeful that he carried his resentment to the utmost degree of cruelty, and so jealous that he could not bear anybody who had more reputation than himself. His carelessness and

indolence were such that he gave himself up entirely to his pleasures, and neglected affairs of the greatest importance. He suffered, with brutal stupidity, the greatest indignity and disgrace that had ever befallen the Roman empire; he basely abandoned his father to the insults of the barbarians, and gave himself no trouble about releasing him from the cruel captivity he endured among them. As for Gallienus, he revived the luxury of the most effeminate Emperors. He was always served in vessels of gold, enriched with diamonds. His robes and shoes were covered with precious stones, and his affectation extended even to his hair, which was powdered with gold dust. He was so voluptuous and extravagant that he despised all ordinary pleasures, being delighted with nothing but what was difficult to be obtained, and he would eat no fruit but such as was out of its natural season. He did not limit his pleasures to these whims and fancies, but plunged into all those shameful debaucheries that are most apt to debilitate both body and mind; thus he was quite unmindful of the condition of the empire, though it required his utmost care and vigilance.

His brother, young Valerianus, had all the necessary good qualities without any considerable faults. In person he was perfectly well proportioned, had an agreeable countenance, and something so civil and affable in his

behaviour that he won the hearts of all who approached him.

He was learned beyond what could be expected at his age, and knew how to temper the vivacity of his wit with good sense. Such were the sons of Valerianus. This great man, having a mind to take from them all opportunities of debauchery, married them; and many are of opinion that two of the princes espoused two sisters,[1] natives of Clazomenae, a town in Ionia, that Valerianus's wife was named Cornelia Supera, and Gallienus's Salonina; but nothing can be asserted positively either about their names or family.

Salonina, whom the Greek medals call Chrysogona, was[2] extremely handsome; and, what was infinitely more valuable than beauty, possessed prudence and virtue, which wonderfully set off her charms. She had read a great deal, and much esteemed learned men, whom she honoured with her protection, particularly the philosopher Plotinus, who often received marks of her generosity. The Senate, after the election of Valerianus, having declared Gallienus Cæsar, conferred upon Salonina all the honours and titles that had usually been given to the

[1] Tristan. Comment. Histor.

[2] Vaillant.

Empresses, and it may be affirmed that in so doing they honoured virtue and merit. She had many children by Gallienus. Cornelius Saloninus,[1] Gallienus, Julia, and Gallia are the best known.

The great qualities of Valerianus caused extraordinary rejoicings at Rome when he was chosen Emperor. The Senate confirmed the election unanimously, and declared the Empress Mariniana August. Her exaltation only served to make her modesty and humility more conspicuous. It was a great satisfaction to the Emperor to see in his wife and daughter-in-law the virtues of which he gave them so illustrious an example; but the scandalous life of his son Gallienus caused him, on the other hand, as much displeasure as it did Salonina, to whom he showed the greatest coolness and indifference, whilst other women were possessed of his real esteem and affection.[2] Valerianus, whose austerity would not permit him to wink at these shameful proceedings, often reprimanded his son for his irregular life, but these wise remonstrances produced no good effect; on the contrary, they made Gallienus hate his father, and rejoice that he was in captivity. This misfortune happened to him in

[1] Tristan.

[2] Trebel. Pol.

the sixth year of his reign, which was so fatal to Rome, for never was there known a time when the Romans had so many enemies upon their hands at once. There was scarcely one of the provinces that did not revolt. No less than thirty tyrants laid claim to the empire, and most insolently abused the authority they had usurped.

Valerianus was very successful in the beginning of these wars, but that with Persia was fatal to him. Sapor, the Persian King, who had given Gordianus a great deal of trouble, having conquered Armenia, carried his arms into Syria, took Antioch, the capital of the East, and then made terrible havoc in Cappadocia, which he ravaged, and took immense riches away with him. Valerianus, much afflicted at these losses, went into the East and endeavoured to repair them, but a much worse disaster happened to him in that country, for having imprudently and without precaution exposed himself to an interview with Sapor (who a little before had gained some advantage over the Romans) the enemy seized and carried him prisoner into Persia. Some affirm that he was taken after the loss of a battle. Be that as it may, Sapor used his victory, or his treachery, with great insolence. He led Valerianus, clothed in the imperial purple robe, in triumph, exposed him to the ridicule of the barbarous nations, and pushing his brutality to the highest degree of

excess, exacted from the Emperor such mean and shameful offices as would not have been put upon the vilest slave, even so far as to make use of him by way of a footstool, when he wanted to mount his horse, or step into his chariot—a strange vicissitude of fortune, which teaches us that there is no permanent felicity in this world, and that everything is liable to change.

Mariniana met with the same fate as her husband, and fell into the hands of the Persians. Sapor[1] respected neither her sex nor her dignity. He treated her with the utmost brutality, so that a Roman Empress was forced to submit to such mortifications as would scarcely have been inflicted upon the meanest of women. There are but few people who have philosophy enough to endure such heavy strokes of fortune as these. Mariniana, besides her own ill-usage, had always before her eyes that of Valerianus. The Persians made their chains daily more insupportable by adding to their miserable condition the most outrageous affronts. The poor unfortunate Empress, not being able to bear it any longer, died, and had the vexation of leaving the most illustrious person on earth in the power of his bitter enemies, who made a jest of his calamities.

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[1] Vaillan.

The news of Valerianus's and Mariniana's captivity threw the empire into the deepest affliction, but if there was anybody who seemed insensible of it it was Gallienus. This unnatural son heard it with stupid indifference, and when he was condoled with upon that occasion, he answered very coldly that he knew his father was mortal, and was consequently liable to the same mischances as other men, and that he had at least this consolation that if his father was unhappy, he had always performed his duty, and fought valiantly. He showed no signs of grief, but went to Rome, and instead of taking proper measures for the Emperor's deliverance, he minded nothing but his infamous pleasures and debaucheries, passing the nights in brothels and the days in the baths.

Salonina was the more sensible of her husband's contempt as her beauty and conduct were such as entitled her to his utmost regard and affection. But his transitory amours were not what gave her most uneasiness; a very formidable rival became the object of her jealousy. It was Pipa, or Pipara, daughter of Attalus, King of the Marcomans, a princess whose charms were much talked of, and the report of which kindled in Gallienus's breast so violent a passion that he imagined the happiness of his life depended upon possessing so amiable a person. He had, however, but small reason to flatter himself

with hopes of success in this affair, where his authority was not sufficient to command it. The princess was not his subject, and therefore not in his power. The Roman law did not admit of his marrying a stranger, and there was no law that the people had a greater respect for. This law had cost Titus and Berenice many a sigh and many a tear ; nor did the son of Vespasian think proper to infringe it, however ardent his love for that charming Jewess.

All this was well known to Gallienus, but being to the full as amorous, and less scrupulous than Titus, he sought for expedients that might furnish him with the means of gratifying his passion without openly violating the laws ; and the melancholy situation of the empire seemed to him a happy conjuncture. The irruptions of the barbarians into almost all the provinces alarmed all the world, for the Roman empire seemed upon the very brink of its ruin. Gallienus,taking advantage of this general consternation, but having much less at heart the interest of the State than his own private amour, assembled the Senate, and represented to them the prodigious number of enemies that seemed to be united for its utter destruction ; that it was impossible for one Emperor to resist so many usurpers, for which reason he had thought proper to make an alliance with some foreign prince, by whose assistance he might be supplied

with such an army of auxiliary troops as should enable him to sustain all these wars. That Attalus, King of the Marcomans, seemed to him the fittest for this purpose, and best able to defend the Romans; and that, in order to make Attalus the more zealous in behalf of the Romans, he imagined the best thing he could do would be that he should marry that prince's daughter.

Gallienus only made the proposal out of courtesy, and to show some little regard for decency, for he knew very well that nobody durst contradict him. There was not remaining in the Senate the least shadow of liberty or uprightness; the Emperor governed its opinions, and reversed its decrees when they were not comformable to his will and pleasure. This step then being taken, Gallienus sent an embassy to Attalus to demand the hand of his daughter. Formerly there was no prince upon earth who would not have looked upon such an alliance as the greatest honour, and have purchased it at any price, but matters were not now upon that footing; the Romans were now no longer feared and respected as they had been even by the greatest monarchs, who paid them homage, either voluntarily or by force. The barbarous nations were now convinced by experience that the Romans were not invincible, for they had seen upon the throne Emperors more worthy of their contempt than fear; hence it came to pass that foreigners

no longer regarded either the Roman arms or the decrees of the Senate.

Attalus lent a favourable ear to this proposal, and seemed highly sensible of the honour that was designed him; but being more crafty than the Roman, and knowing how much Gallienus was smitten with his daughter, he was resolved to make him purchase her. He accordingly raised such difficulties as could not be got over without Gallienus's yielding to him part of Pannonia; and it was upon these conditions that the hand of the Princess Pipara was obtained, and she was conducted to Rome. The beauty of this charming stranger augmented Gallienus's esteem for her; he had not only the affection of a husband, but the complaisance of a lover,[1] and indulged his weakness so far as always to carry about him a lock of her hair.[2]

It was well for Salonina that she had acquired sufficient command over her temper to bear, with less uneasiness than might have been expected, this new amour; she contented herself with the outward civility that her husband was pleased to bestow upon her, and learnt philosophy enough to wink at his gallantries. The

[1] Excerpt. Aurel. Victor.
[2] Trebel. Pol. de Saloni.

love she had for the sciences served to amuse her, and divert her thoughts from such reflections as would otherwise have been very troublesome. She had gained a great reputation among the learned, which, together with the respect shown her by all classes in the city, made her amends for the loss of her husband's heart, of which Pipara had robbed her. Her wisdom, prudence, and sweetness of temper procured her the love of all the Romans. Her behaviour was such as could not but win everybody's affections; for not the least pride or haughtiness was to be seen in her whole deportment. Her goodness frequently induced her to sacrifice her interests, and her indulgence was such as always inclined her to forgive any who had injured her. This was seen upon an occasion when she even seemed to carry her clemency a little too far.

There happened to arrive at Rome a jeweller, who, among some diamonds of great price, had a great many false stones. Some were of glass, but they were such admirable imitations that there was scarcely anybody skilful enough to find out the difference. This person went to Court, and presented his jewels to the Empress, who was struck with their beauty and lustre; she chose out those she liked best, and paid the price. The false being the most brilliant and best set, she selected them.

She showed her purchase to the ladies and courtiers, who greatly admired them, but upon a closer examination the cheat was discovered. The Empress being very vexed and ashamed at having been imposed upon, gave orders to arrest the merchant; but, not being desirous to carry her revenge very far, she contented herself with putting him in a terrible fright.

The jeweller was congratulating himself on his good success, when he was seized[1] and conducted to prison. They gave him to understand that he was condemned to be torn to pieces by lions in the amphitheatre. The appointed day being come, the people flocked thither in great multitudes to satisfy their curiosity; the criminal was brought out, and every moment they expected to see half a dozen famished lions let loose upon him. The eyes of the people were fixed upon the den, where they were told the beasts that were to devour the jeweller were shut up. The signal being given, the door of the cave opened, and the jeweller almost fell dead with fear. At last, out flew a cock directly in the face of the malefactor, who was placed close by the den, which made him cry out and tremble prodigiously. The spectators, who expected a more bloody scene, could not forbear laughing heartily at

[1] Trebel. Pollio. Gallien.

the merchant's terror. A herald immediately proclaimed with a loud voice, that the trick had been revenged by another; and this was all the punishment that was inflicted upon the offender.

It would have been lucky for the inhabitants of Mœsia if Gallienus had been as merciful, but he punished that province with the utmost rigour for having encouraged the revolt of Ingenuus, whose death, however, did not deter many others from rebelling. Gallienus's effeminacy and the little care he took of the government exposed the sovereign authority to such a degree that it fell a prey to anybody who could lay hold of it, so that every day a new tyrant appeared. One of the most formidable was Cassianus Postumus, Governor of Gaul. He was a man of obscure birth, but had the reputation of being an extraordinary general and politician, possessed of excellent talents, as well for ruling a kingdom as for defending it valiantly, equally experienced in war and in peace. Gallienus thought him a man of so much mérit that he trusted him with the education of his son Saloninus and the command of the army in Gaul. He even imagined he had discovered in this officer inviolable fidelity. But ambition corrupted him; he no longer looked upon Gallienus as his superior, but assumed the imperial purple at Cologne,[1] murdered

[1] Trebel. Pol. Trig. Tyr.

Saloninus, and carried on his rebellion during seven years.

In the meantime Valerianus was the sport of a barbarous Court, who insulted his misfortunes with the utmost brutality; but what most afflicted him was the undutifulness of his son, and his insensibility to the miserable captivity he groaned under. In fact, Gallienus plunged into a voluptuous course of life, and thought of nothing but how to please Pipara and gain her affections, indulging himself in the most shameful debaucheries; he seemed to forget entirely that his father and most of the provinces were in the enemies' hands, which stupidity emboldened the barbarians and tyrants to undertake what enterprise they pleased.

Sapor especially had carried his conquests very far into the empire; but Odenatus, King of the Palmyreans, checked his career. He was a prince of great courage, and inured to fatigue by the continual exercise of hunting, which he had been accustomed to from his childhood in the mountains of Palmyra (a city in the deserts of Syria, upon the confines of Arabia), where he endured heat, cold, and all the inclemencies of the weather with admirable patience. His ancestors had been always friends to

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[1] Trebel. de Postum.

the Romans, and he himself was no enemy to them, but was obliged to act cautiously with Sapor, whose power and ambition were become formidable to all the East; accordingly, when Valerianus was taken prisoner, Odenatus sent ambassadors to the Persian, loaded with magnificent presents; they also carried a submissive letter, congratulating him upon his victories, but at the same time entreating him to push his conquests no further for fear of irritating all the neighbouring princes. Sapor, whose prosperity had made him haughty and insolent beyond measure, looking upon Odenatus rather as his slave than an independent king, despised his embassy, and expressed great displeasure at the liberty this prince had taken in writing to him. He commanded the presents to be thrown into the river, and tore the letter in pieces in presence of the ambassadors, whom he charged to tell their master that he would soon let him know that it was not for a vassal to treat with his lord by ambassadors, and that he should dearly repent his temerity if he did not expiate his fault by coming to him immediately with his hands tied behind his back.

Odenatus was extremely sensible of this affront, and was determined to humble the intolerable pride of Sapor. His wife Zenobia strengthened him in this resolution, and encouraged him in his design. She was a most illustrious

princess, originally of Syria, and a Jewess, if the ecclesiastical historians are to be credited. She was descended from Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt,[1] so famous for her beauty, and the misfortunes of Marc Antony, her lover. Zenobia had inherited her charms, but not her failings! She was considered the finest woman in the East, and had withal a certain masculine air that seemed to show her courage and intrepidity; she was of a brown complexion, and had large black eyes, whence proceeded such fire and vivacity as were irresistible. Over all her person were diffused charms that made her infinitely amiable, and the qualities of her mind were no less praiseworthy than her bodily perfections. She had great talents, and a courage incapable of yielding under difficulties. No undertaking could be too great for her abilities, natural and acquired, for she had cultivated and greatly improved her mind by study. She spoke perfectly well the Greek and Egyptian languages, and was mistress of the history of the East, of which she had made an abridgment. The philosopher Longinus was her preceptor, and instructed her in all manner of sciences. She was also desirous to become acquainted with the Christian religion, but had a bad master in Paul

[1] Athanas. Epist. ad Solitar.

of Samosata, who taught her his errors. She was naturally generous and magnanimous, which made her a lover of honour and glory. As she was careful and economical, she never incurred any unnecessary expenses; she was reserved in speech and behaviour, and so strict an observer of order and discipline that she was both feared for her severity and loved for her clemency, tempering one with the other, and seldom preferring the necessity of punishing to the pleasure of showing mercy.

Never was heroine so indefatigable in military affairs; she would frequently (notwithstanding the delicacy of her sex) march several leagues on foot with the troops. But none of her good qualities were more remarkable than her chastity. She was not only exempt from all suspicion of taking liberties that were not consistent with virtue, but we read that she would never allow any intercourse with her husband after she perceived herself to be with child. This princess, being informed of the insulting reception her husband's ambassadors had met with from Sapor, and seeing the insolent and provoking threats with which his letter was filled, persuaded him not only to break off all further negotiations with the Persians, but to enter into a strict alliance with the Romans, in order to be revenged upon him. Balista at that time commanded the Roman legions in the East. He was a very skilful

officer, full of resources and expedients for conducting and provisioning the army. Odenatus let him know his intentions, and his proposals were received with great joy. He was put at the head of the army, and it was upon this occasion that he performed all those great actions mentioned in history. He defeated the troops of Sapor, and obliged him to repass the Euphrates with shameful precipitation. He afterwards carried his arms into Mesopotamia, and conquered all the East.

Sapor, astonished at this change of fortune, was glad to retire into his own dominions, and fled before Odenatus; but the latter, pursuing him vigorously into Persia, shut him up in Ctesiphon, the capital, where he kept him in continual alarm. Zenobia, accompanying her husband in all these military expeditions, shared with him both the fatigue and the glory of them.

These fortunate exploits re-established the prestige of the empire. Rome celebrated them with the greatest rejoicings, and looked upon Odenatus as its chief support. Then it was that the greatest lords of Persia were seen entering the city loaded with chains, and gracing the triumph of this prince, who was received with all possible marks of esteem and respect; and Gallienus, to honour the merit of the conqueror, made him general of all the East; for there were no dignities or posts commensurate

with his deserts. Odenatus avenged the empire of the insults and mortifications that Sapor had inflicted upon it, and the Emperor found in him a general who was able to sustain his fortunes. He had so much the more reason to promote him, because, although sovereign master of the Roman troops, covered with laurels, and dreaded by the enemy, he added to the importance of his services the glory of a constant and unshaken fidelity, at a time when most of the Roman generals had shaken off the yoke of obedience, turned tyrants, and changed into so many empires the provinces they had been entrusted with. In fact, Macrianus had assumed the purple in Egypt, Valens in Greece, Piso in Thessaly, Aureolus in Illyria, and were become bitter enemies to their benefactors. Even Balista had the baseness to abandon the service of the Emperor and join Macrianus, whose revolt he would have made very dangerous if Odenatus had not punished him as he deserved. Those provinces which did not fall a sacrifice to the usurpers were exposed to the incursions of the barbarians; the Scythians overran Asia, and the Goths made perpetual irruptions into Macedonia and Achaia. So many enemies having sprung up at once aroused Gallienus out of his lethargy; but what resolution could a prince take who was softened with pleasures, and enervated with all sorts of debaucheries?

Young Valerianus represented to him the danger of the empire, and persuaded him to associate Odenatus with him as partner on the throne, in order to induce him, in his own interest, to defend the provinces that were to be his. Gallienus did not hesitate about it, but made Odenatus his colleague. He declared him Cæsar and Emperor, and gave him all the insignia of sovereignty, causing money to be coined with his image and inscription.

Zenobia ascended the throne together with her husband. She was declared August, and her sons received the title of Cæsar. It must be acknowledged that no Empress was more deserving of this high rank; for, of all those who had been exalted to the empire, either by their birth or their fortune, few were exempt from some great vice or other, and the most that could be said even of the best of them was, that they had some virtues mingled with their faults; but none were like Zenobia, endowed with all those talents and good qualities that were capable of doing honour to either sex. Odenatus, by new services that he rendered the empire, proved himself worthy of the honour that was done him. He made more conquests, and established peace throughout all the East.

Odenatus's victories excited the emulation of Gallienus. Those who had his reputation at heart made him at last

sensible of the injury he did himself by leading a voluptuous life, whilst his colleague was acquiring honour and glory, and convinced him that he ought to sacrifice his pleasures to duty, and take up arms in defence of the empire ; that all these revolts were owing to his indolence, and might have been prevented if he could have prevailed upon himself to chastise the rebels in person. Gallienus was subject to sudden resolutions that drew him out of his ordinary habits. It was thus not impossible for his intimates, by managing him skilfully, to inspire him with vigorous resolutions. These remonstrances had so good an effect that he resolved to tear himself from the arms of Pipara and all his pleasures. He put himself, therefore, at the head of his army, and marched to fight Postumus, who had established himself as a usurper. He showed in this expedition more courage than was to be expected from a prince who was abandoned to luxury, and an enemy to fatigue. He reduced the tyrant to such extremities that, finding himself not able to resist the Emperor, he made Victorinus[1] partner in his dignity, or rather his revolt. Victorinus was a man very skilful in the art of war. Nature had given him all the talents that were necessary to form a hero, and history assures us

[1] Trebel. de Victorin.

that he possessed all the good qualities of the most illustrious Emperors. But he was given to one vice that tarnished all his virtues—he was so amorously inclined that he lost the affections of his officers by endeavouring to debauch their wives.

He was a son of the famous Victoria, or Victorina, a princess of great courage and ambition, very little inferior to Zenobia in point of merit. She was especially so clever at managing the soldiers that she could do what she pleased with them; and it was at her persuasion that Postumus chose her son Victorinus for his colleague. She was, in short, the most formidable of Gallienus's enemies, for she had an enterprising genius; whatever she undertook she executed with resolution, and generally with success, so that she was looked upon as the most dangerous enemy to the empire. She assumed the titles of August and Mother of the Armies, and maintained her dignity with great honour and reputation as long as she lived. Thus was Victoria as much celebrated for her great and heroic qualities in the West as Zenobia was in the East; and it may be said that the empire was governed by these two women.

After Odenatus had shut up the Persians within their own borders, and recovered all that had been taken from the Romans, he made very good regulations for

preserving peace and tranquility in the East. Zenobia received in those countries all the honour that was due to her, and it was given her with pleasure, because everybody was convinced that she was worthy of it. It might reasonably be imagined that she had nothing to wish for but the continuance of her good fortune; but what condition is so happy as not to be embittered with some vexation or other? Zenobia, upon the throne, was tormented with anxieties and jealousies that interrupted her felicity, and this princess, after having so gloriously contributed to the elevation of Odenatus's family, became its most cruel scourge.

Odenatus had, by his first wife, a son named Herodes, whom he loved exceedingly, though he was not very deserving of it. This young prince was of a mild and humane disposition, but, like all Orientals, a lover of pleasures and diversions, and fitter for gallantry than war. He carried his luxury to the highest pitch, and his father was so complaisant as to indulge him in it by supplying him with funds for his pleasures, for he made him a present of all the magnificent furniture,[1] precious jewels, and immense riches that he had taken from Sapor, and even gave him all that prince's concubines.

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[1] Trebel. Pol. de Herod.

Zenobia had three sons, Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vaballath, from whom she expected great things. She educated them in the principles and after the manner of the Romans, had them taught Latin, and put them under the tuition of the famous philosopher Longinus, who instructed them in the sciences. In short, she omitted nothing that was necessary to qualify them for the throne, for which she intended them, hoping to prevail upon Odenatus to adopt them; but Herodes was a powerful obstacle to her projects. This young prince had been declared King of Palmyra jointly with his father, and when Gallienus and the Senate decreed the empire to Odenatus they made his eldest son his colleague. As Odenatus was extremely fond of Herodes, Zenobia could not help being jealous, and from this sprung that invincible aversion she always had for Herodes, and the ill offices she never failed to do him on every occasion, which were such as became the malice of a cruel stepmother. Odenatus, however, knowing how much Herodes was hated by Zenobia, only felt the greater affection for him.

That sort of jealousy that proceeds from ambition is the most dangerous kind. Zenobia, not being able to bear the thought of her son-in-law mounting the throne, which she imagined had been obtained more by her

courage and advice than by her husband's merit, resolved to procure for her own sons the sovereign authority, and not to stop at any crime to gain her point. A son-in-law runs no small risk when a jealous step-mother is looking out for means to put him to death, and the husband frequently pays dearly for the favours he has conferred upon any children he may have had by a former marriage.

There was in the Court of Odenatus a prince called Mæonius, nearly related to the Emperor. They happened to quarrel as they were hunting together, for Mæonius had several times had the presumption to kill any game that came near Odenatus, and thereby deprived him of that satisfaction. Odenatus, being provoked at this want of respect, insulted him. Mæonius was so irritated at this that he threatened Odenatus, who, not being able to endure such audacious behaviour, was going to kill Mæonius, and would probably have done so if Herodes had not thrown himself at his father's feet and interceded so strenuously for his cousin that Odenatus could not resist him. The quarrel being thus made up Mæonius was as much in favour as before, but he bore malice at heart, and was determined at one time or other to be revenged upon Odenatus. We read that Zenobia did all she could to heighten this discontent,[1] and never

[1] Trebel. Pol. de Mæon. Zonar. Ann.

ceased to exasperate them against each other, till she had prevailed upon Mæonius to revenge the affront he pretended to have received. He communicated his design to Odenatus's nephew, and holding out the most flattering hopes, gave him to understand that if they could get rid of Odenatus they would have nothing to do but to possess themselves of his fortune and riches. Young Odenatus, being thus deluded, entered into the conspiracy, and they waited with great impatience for a favourable opportunity of putting their design into execution.

At the very time when this plot was going on, Odenatus was acquiring great honour. He had marched against the Persians, and was in a fair way of completing their ruin. He besieged Ctesiphon and took it, notwithstanding the obstinate resistance he met with. He afterwards vanquished the Goths, those barbarians who had overrun Asia, and who were no sooner informed of Odenatus's approach than they fled with precipitation; but Odenatus overtook them in time to deal great slaughter, and his presence terrified both the barbarians and the tyrants. All these advantages convinced the Romans that they could never value too much a prince who was capable of doing them such essential service, and they did not doubt the affairs of the empire would soon be put on a better footing than ever under the conduct of this great man.

But the gods, says an historian,[1] being irritated against the State, had resolved to give them the greatest mark of their displeasure by depriving them of their chief support.

Odenatus having thus gloriously finished this campaign, halted at Ephesus, and made a considerable stay in that city, to keep the enemy in awe. He had his son Herodes with him, and when he was one night at supper a troop of the conspirators rushed into the room and brutally massacred both father and son. Mæonius and young Odenatus were the authors of this treason, and by that means gratified the ambition of Zenobia.

The death of Odenatus was reckoned the greatest misfortune that could possibly have befallen the empire. Gallienus, knowing how difficult it would be to repair such a loss, was extremely afflicted at it. The condition of affairs, and particularly of Odenatus's family, was quite changed. Zenobia caused her sons, Herennianus and Timolaus, to assume the purple robes and the other imperial ornaments, and presented them to the army with great pomp and magnificence. She seized the empire in their names, and took the title of Queen of the East, which she preferred to that of Empress. It gave

[1] Trebel. Pol. de Oden.

her great pleasure to hear of Victoria's grandeur in those countries, where she made and unmade Emperors at pleasure, and, of her own authority, took the titles of August and Mother of the Armies. She interested herself extremely in everything that concerned Victoria, and wished for nothing so much as to be able to join her forces to those of this Amazon, that they might together conquer the whole world,[1] a project worthy of Zenobia's courage and ambition.

The Emperor Gallienus, being informed of Zenobia's behaviour, no longer regarded her as an ally zealous for the good of the Roman empire, but as one who was building her own fortune on the ruins of the State. Zenobia, to tell the truth, seemed to have some such design, and did not show Gallienus all that respect that Odenatus did upon all occasions, never failing to communicate to him all his designs and undertakings. She demanded of the Romans neither succour nor advice, but governed the East with absolute and independent authority. Gallienus took such measures as he thought would put a stop to her proceedings and humble her pride; he sent Heraclianus into the East to command the troops, and gave him secret orders to attack Zenobia as soon as he should

[1] Trebel. Pol.

have a fair opportunity. But as he knew her to be a woman not likely to lay down her arms and divest herself of the sovereign power, which she had tasted the sweets of, his pretence was that he desired to subdue the Persians entirely, and flattered himself that, the true reason of his sending Heraclianus being thus concealed, she would not be alarmed at his arrival; but it was no easy matter to impose upon Zenobia. She looked upon Heraclianus as a man she ought to suspect, and therefore took care to prevent him making a party in the East by marching directly to meet him. She accordingly gave him battle, and defeated his army. She showed by this action that war under her conduct was not less formidable than in the hands of Odenatus, and that there are heroines capable of the greatest undertakings. She proved the truth of this assertion in the East, whilst Victoria sufficiently demonstrated it in Gaul. The latter governed in the name of her son, Victorinus, who had caused himself to be declared Emperor. We have observed that he might be compared to the greatest princes for his excellent qualities. He had[1] the courage of Trajan, the clemency and mildness of Antoninus, the gravity of Nerva, and the authority of Severus, but all these virtues

[1] Trebel. Pol. de Victorin.

were eclipsed by his incontinence. It is true that after he came to the throne he denied himself for some time, but nature got the better of his resolutions, and returned with greater violence than ever. He kept no bounds, but without reserve or decency gave full scope to his inclinations, and imagining that his authority placed him above all fear or censure, he did not scruple to indulge himself by corrupting his officers' wives.

A commissary of the provision supply, named Atticianus, who had been thus insulted, was more delicate in that point than others whom the Emperor had dishonoured, and who patiently submitted to their disgrace. Victorinus had debauched his wife, which he resented in the highest degree. He was neither indifferent nor politic enough to put up with such an injury; he bore it continually in mind, and could not rest without being revenged. Victorinus had offended so many in that way without their ever daring to complain that he did not apprehend he had anything to fear from a person much below a great number of others, who were timorous enough to wink at these gallantries; but no enemy is to be despised. Whilst Victorinus was at Cologne, thinking of nothing but his pleasures, and leaving all affairs to the conduct of his mother, Atticianus was hatching a conspiracy against him, which he carried on with so much secrecy and

cunning that Victorinus received a mortal wound, which afforded him but just time to declare his son, Victorinus, August, and name him his successor. Victoria, who had persuaded him to this, confirmed it, and proclaimed her grandson Emperor. This prince was so young that he was incapable of governing, but this was so much the better for Victorina, who desired only the shadow of an Emperor, in whose name she might exercise an absolute authority.

The honour she had procured for her grandson was, however, fatal to him; for those who had massacred his father, not thinking their lives in safety under an Emperor so much interested to revenge his death, resolved to free themselves from the punishment they deserved by another crime. They therefore plunged into the breast of the young Emperor the very poniards that were yet reeking with his father's blood. This created more work for Victoria. She had been so accustomed to unlimited power that she exhausted all her resources to maintain it. Her chief object was to cause some general to be elected who should not be in a condition to govern by himself, for she apprehended nothing so much as having a master. Marius, she thought, would answer her purpose, and proposed it to the legions. She so well employed her talent of persuading that she got him proclaimed Emperor.

Marius had been an armourer. He was remarkable for his extraordinary strength, of which he had given surprising examples. He had passed through all military grades till he reached that of general, and when Victoria invested him with the purple it was understood between them that, however willing she might be to let him enjoy the honours of the government, she reserved the solid part of it for herself. Marius was no sooner elected than he assembled the soldiers, and spoke to them thus: "I am sensible, my comrades, that I am liable to be reproached with the meanness of my first occupation. I shall not deny that I have handled iron, for you are all witnesses to it; but let people say what they will, I hope to handle it yet for the good of the empire; for it will be more honourable for me to do so at the expense of the enemy than to plunge myself into pleasures and effeminacy like Gallienus, who has tarnished the splendour of his birth by his infamous debaucheries. Let people affirm that I was formerly an armourer, provided the barbarians do but learn by experience that I still know how to handle arms."

This modest discourse did more honour to Marius than his dignity, as it seemed an undoubted proof of his humility and moderation. There are but few upstarts who have the courage to confess the obscurity of their

birth ; they are more apt to obliterate the least traces of their former lowness, and hope, by their riches and high offices, to impose upon the world. The new Emperor, with all his affected simplicity, was not, it seems, proof against this sort of seductive pride, for a soldier, who had learned his trade under him in his shop, coming to congratulate him on his exaltation, was received with great contempt, which provoked him to that degree that, not being master of his passion, he killed him on the spot, saying, "This very sword you made yourself."

The death of Marius furnished new material for intrigues at Court. Victoria, who trembled to think of an election that might not be to her mind, dispensed her money very plentifully among the officers and soldiers. By this politic liberality she had so gained the affection of the legions as to be almost sure of them upon any occasion. She applied to them on behalf of Tetricus, a Roman senator,[1] who commanded in one part of Gaul, and who was her relation. She succeeded, and as soon as he was chosen she despatched a courier to give him notice of it, and exhorted him not to refuse a dignity that the army had thought proper to confer upon him. It is not often that such offers are rejected, for an empire is no

[1] Trebel. de Tetric. Sen.

present to be despised. Tetricus put on the imperial robe at Bordeaux, and showed that he was deserving of the honour that was done him.[1] He gave his son Tetricus the title of Cæsar, and soon after had an opportunity of signalising his courage and experience in Spain.

While he was engaged in that war, Victoria had the government of Gaul, and the entire conduct of all affairs; for Tetricus, who was as cunning as she, thought proper to humour her at first; but when he thought himself pretty well confirmed in his authority he resolved not to submit any longer to the yoke of an imperious woman, who, he knew, only made a tool of him, in order to concentrate all power in herself and gratify her ambition. Victoria, thus made the dupe of her own policy, was stung to the quick at this ingratitude, and would infallibly have made him dearly repent it if death had not prevented her. It is credibly reported that Tetricus, fearing the effects of her artifices and resentment, adopted means to put an end to her career. Thus perished the celebrated Victoria, who had filled Gaul, and, indeed, all the empire with her reputation.

At the time when this princess and Zenobia were

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[1] Eutrop.

gaining the admiration of all the world for their heroism, Salonina was as much esteemed at Rome for virtues that were less tumultuous, such prudence, mildness, and sweetness of temper as nothing could alter or disturb. The affronts that she received from Gallienus were not capable of diminishing her affection for his person, nor her attachment to his interests, of which she gave him an instance that nearly proved fatal to her.

The news of the Scythians making terrible havoc in Illyria having reached Rome, Gallienus tore himself from his debaucheries, and put himself at the head of his army to fight them. Salonina, who feared for her husband, whose soft and effeminate conduct she knew caused the troops to murmur, insisted upon accompanying him on his expedition. Some days after the army had reached Illyria, and the Emperor had left but a slender guard in the camp, having marched against the enemy with all his forces, the barbarians, knowing the Emperor's design, and that the camp was left in a manner defenceless, resolved to carry off the Empress, which they preferred to a victory. They therefore detached for this purpose a troop of resolute soldiers fitted for a bold undertaking, who marched so silently and with so much precaution that they came in sight of the camp without being perceived. Salonina nearly fell into their hands, in which

case she would have undergone the same fate as Mariniana; for the enemy was but a very small distance from the camp when a soldier, who had gone out by chance, saw them and gave the alarm, and snatching up his sword and shield, met the barbarians and killed a great number of them. By his astonishing courage and resolution, he gave his comrades time to come to his assistance.

It is no difficult matter to imagine the terror of the Empress, who knew upon what errand they came, and that the barbarians were persuaded they could not possibly gain a greater advantage over Gallienus than to rob him of his wife. Pipara would, no doubt, have been much obliged to them, nor is it probable that Gallienus would have broken his heart for the loss. Be that as it may, Salonina got off with the fright, and returned to Rome with her husband after he had dealt terrible slaughter among the Scythians, which was more owing to his good fortune than his merit.

The Emperor no sooner arrived at Rome than Aureolus, who had been so often rebellious, revolted again; and upon Gallienus's approach, retired to Milan, where he was besieged. The generals of the army imputed all these insurrections to Gallienus's effeminate life. Marcianus and Ceronius especially thought themselves highly dishonoured by being obliged to obey a

prince who was so little worthy to command. Their ambition caused them to speak disrespectfully of Gallienus, to give the army a worse impression of him than they had already, and in order to get themselves chosen in his stead; but as they were secretly jealous of each other, they resolved to get Claudius proclaimed Emperor, who was a very deserving general, and much esteemed by the Senate and the legions. The better to succeed in this scheme, they gave Gallienus a false alarm, and had him informed that Aureolus had quitted Milan, and was in sight of the camp with a strong detachment.

Upon this Gallienus hastened to put his troops in order of battle, but the conspirators, watching a favourable moment, fell upon him and killed him, as well as young Saloninus and Salonina, who was deserving of a better fate. Such was the death of this Empress, who had done great honour to her station by her great wisdom and zeal for the public welfare.

It was soon known that the new Emperor was worthy of the high rank to which he was raised; his valour became very formidable to the barbarians and tyrants, and his other qualities of the greatest utility to the empire. He demonstrated his courage and experience in every battle he fought, and gave sufficient tokens of his wisdom and prudence by the excellent laws and regulations he

established, proving himself equally meritorious in war and in peace.

While he was employed in subduing the Goths, Zenobia displayed her extraordinary resolution and intrepidity in the East, where she was making daily conquests and extending her dominions. She defeated the Egyptians, and destroyed a great number of their troops. Claudius, being informed of all these enterprises, sent Probus, who was one of his most skilful generals, into Egypt. The Palmyreans were at first put to flight, but Zenobia sending them a reinforcement, the troops of Probus were surprised and defeated, and the whole country was again in her power. Claudius, having the Goths upon his hands, seemed to take no notice of the affronts he received from the Queen of the East, and not being at liberty to give her battle, he thought it his best plan to amuse her with a treaty of peace till he could have a fair opportunity of being revenged. Then, having nothing to fear from Egypt, he turned all his forces against the Goths, over whom he gained that celebrated victory which cost three hundred and twenty thousand of the barbarians their lives. He also destroyed two thousand of their ships. Those who escaped being put to the sword by the Romans were cut off by famine and pestilence. But this last scourge did not prey only upon the Goths,

for the Romans were greatly afflicted by it, and the Emperor himself died of it at Sirmium. Quintillus, his brother, was elected in his stead, but not being found capable of performing the duties of that high post the soldiers killed him, and chose Aurelian in his place. His character will be given in the following chapter, so we shall say no more of him at present than what relates to Zenobia's history. This princess had conquered all Egypt, Syria, and the greater part of Asia Minor. The alliance that she had made with Claudius, and which was of his seeking, exceedingly flattered her vanity, for she imagined the Romans were afraid, and had not courage to attack her. She was so confident of this that she did not now think it worth while to renew the alliance with Aurelian that she had concluded with his predecessor. Aurelian, provoked at being thus despised by a woman, resolved to humble her; but knowing that Zenobia was not an enemy to be slighted, he assembled the greatest part of his troops and marched into Syria.

Zenobia, hearing of all these preparations, made ready to give the Emperor a fitting reception; and, being told of his approach, marched out of Antioch at the head of her army, having under her Saba, a very experienced general. She met the Romans near the river Orontes, and there the battle was fought. Aurelian, though full of valour

and courage, had recourse to a stratagem which succeeded. Zenobia's army was composed of Palmyreans and other Orientals, who were in armour from head to foot, which was so cumbersome that they were scarce able to move. The Emperor having observed it, pretended to flee before her to entice those Asiatics to a pursuit. They fell into the snare, for, taking it for granted that the Romans were afraid to engage, they followed them so close that in a little time they were out of breath. Aurelian, like an experienced officer, took advantage of their weariness, and causing his troops to face about, attacked them with such vigour that vast numbers of them were slain.

Zenobia was at the head of her army doing everything that could be expected from the ablest general, and encouraging her soldiers by her speeches, gestures, and example; but her harangues had not upon this occasion their usual effect. Her troops were put to flight, and she had the mortification of abandoning the field of battle to the conqueror, and of retiring to Emesa. She had scarcely reached that place, and collected the scattered remains of her army, than she was compelled to risk a second engagement; for Aurelian, resolving to make the most of the ardour of his soldiers and the consternation of the enemy, followed and overtook them near Daphne.

Fortune was no more favourable to her now than before, for her army was defeated; and when she perceived that, whatever efforts she made, it was impossible to rally her men, she shut herself up in Palmyra, where she imagined she was safe. The town was defended by a numerous garrison, and the Queen had supplied it with all sorts of ammunition and provisions,[1] so that it was reckoned impregnable. The Emperor was convinced that the siege of this place would be tedious, difficult, and bloody; but, on the other hand, he knew that the capture of it would put an end to the war, and that it would be very glorious for him to subdue Zenobia, whose reputation had filled all the empire, whereas all the advantages he had hitherto gained would be to no purpose, if he gave that princess time to repair her loss. This determined him to sit down before it. He found the undertaking as dangerous and difficult as he had foreseen, and if the Romans performed prodigies of valour to make themselves masters of the town, the besieged were not at all inferior to them in defending it. Aurelian called all his experience and intrepidity to his assistance, and exposed himself so much that he was wounded with an arrow. Zenobia, who feared more than death the shame of

[1] Vopisc. in Aurel.

adorning the triumph of the conqueror, showed the courage, or rather fury, of an enemy driven to despair.

The length of the siege, the uncertainty of the issue, and the obstinacy of the besieged, made Aurelian repent more than once that he had undertaken it. He saw with great vexation that his conquests were likely to be interrupted and all his laurels withered before Palmyra, and that by a woman, who gave him more trouble than he had ever met with from an enemy before. He knew that at Rome he was ridiculed and made a jest of for being thus baffled by a woman; but he was not ashamed to give her the praise she deserved by declaring that she was not cast in the same mould as the rest of her sex, but on the contrary was by far the most formidable enemy the empire had. He wrote to his intimate friend Marcipor to justify himself. "I am informed," said he, "that with you people make their remarks upon my being at war with a woman, as if this Queen was less to be dreaded than the most consummate hero. I could heartily wish that those who are so given to raillery could see the astonishing quantity of provisions and all things necessary to the defence of a place that she has laid up in Palmyra. What arrows, arms, stores, and machines for throwing fire upon the assailants; what palisades to hinder them from approaching the walls!

To give you a just idea of Zenobia, I shall only say that this princess does not defend herself like a woman, but like an experienced general, who, fearing to incur the penalties of misbehaviour, puts in practice all his skill and abilities to prevent his being conquered. And this I can assure you, that, in order to get the better of Zenobia, we have need that the gods (ever propitious to the Roman arms) should be favourable, and not fail us upon this important occasion."

Nothing does so much honour to Zenobia as this forced commendation given her by Aurelian, who without dispute was a great warrior, and a very good judge of true merit. It appears by this that Zenobia was as much dreaded by Aurelian as he was by his enemies. It was not his fault if this war was not terminated by treaty. He offered terms to Zenobia, promising her and all belonging to her security, and to leave the Palmyreans in quiet possession of all they enjoyed. But Zenobia was not a woman to put herself willingly in the power of the conqueror; far from coming to terms with Aurelian she sent him a haughty answer, capable of intimidating an Emperor who was less brave than he. In her letter she says: "I am surprised that you should propose to me to surrender. So great a hero as you ought to know that it must be by deeds of valour, and not by letters,

that enemies are compelled to yield. You are the first that ever paid me such a compliment, and might have been better acquainted with me than to talk in that style. I would have you call to mind that I am descended from Cleopatra, and have no less firmness and resolution than she. Death seems to me, as it did to her, a lesser evil than slavery; nor should I think the greatest dignity in the world worth purchasing at the expense of my liberty. Do not imagine that you are speedily to be master of Palmyra, for the powerful assistance that the Persians are sending us is just at hand; the Saracens and Armenians will also help us, and how do you propose to deal with so many enemies—you who have found by experience that a band of Syrian robbers has been able to beat your whole army? Our allies will presently join us; we shall then bring down that pride of yours, which induces you to command us with so much haughtiness to surrender at discretion."

Aurelian was stung to the quick by this epistle, and was more than ever determined to take the town, cost what it would. He surrounded it with his army to prevent its being succoured, and a troop of Persians, which made an attempt to throw themselves into the place, was entirely defeated. The Palmyreans were thunderstruck at this accident, for notwithstanding what

they had declared, their provisions began to fail. Then it was that Zenobia, despairing of help, and seeing neither the Armenians nor Saracens coming to her aid, for Aurelian had gained them over by presents, had but small expectation of being able to preserve the town. She foresaw, on the other hand, all the miseries that would be the consequence of its being taken by assault; but on the other, she could not bear the thoughts of falling into the hands of the conqueror after the boastful letter she had written. Her pride presented to her all the horrors of slavery, and the shame of being compelled to follow the triumphal chariot of Aurelian. She chose, therefore, to run all risks rather than implore the clemency of an Emperor she had provoked by her obstinacy and the haughtiness of her letter. She knew she could prevail upon the Palmyreans to defend themselves to the last extremity, and had some small ray of hope that she might yet save the place if it were possible to procure any assistance. She resolved, then, to go out of the town secretly, and beg the King of Persia to furnish her with the auxiliaries he had promised, and then to put herself at the head of the troops and attack the Romans. Having taken this resolution, and used all the necessary precautions that everything should in the meantime be carried on according to her directions, she

got out of the town privately, and with few attendants. Aurelian, however, had notice of her escape, and knowing of what importance it would be to secure her, sent after her some light horse, who went so fast that they overtook her upon the banks of the Euphrates, just as she was going to cross the river. She was treated with the utmost respect, and brought back to Aurelian.

The Emperor was in transports of joy when he saw Zenobia in his power. He understood better than anybody the value of this piece of good fortune, which made him master of all the East, and put an end to a war that gave him infinite trouble and anxiety. But the more this event gave satisfaction to Aurelian, the more insupportable was Zenobia's affliction. It would not be easy to describe the wretched condition to which this princess was reduced, who after having given law to the empire, saw herself a prisoner, and destined to the mortifying fate of serving as a trophy to those enemies she had often conquered. Her disgrace did not, for all that, quite sink her spirits; for in her countenance still reigned that air of grandeur and noble haughtiness so natural to those who are born to command. Neither the pretence nor reproaches of Aurelian were capable of shaking her courage and resolution; and when the Emperor asked her how she could ever think of acting as an enemy

towards the Romans, to whom she owed her fortune, she boldly answered, that indeed, as far as he was concerned, she had always had the greatest esteem and respect for him, because she knew him to be worthy of the empire; but that she had never looked upon Gallienus and all those tyrants, who had taken the title of Emperor, as other than persons who disgraced their dignity by their shameful and scandalous behaviour.

Zenobia's capture was soon followed by the taking of Palmyra. The greatest part of the inhabitants resolved to hold out to the last, but the others opposed a design that could not be attended with any good consequences, and must needs end in the destruction of the town; they accordingly demanded quarter of Aurelian, and opened their gates. The Emperor carried away immense wealth from Palmyra, and after placing a strong garrison in it, went to Emesa, where he decided the fate of the captives. Those who had shown themselves most zealous for Zenobia, and had espoused her interests with too much warmth, were punished with death. Among their number was Longinus, who was accused of being the author of Zenobia's letter to Aurelian. The soldiers were very importunate that the princess should lose her life; but the Emperor, though not very gallant, could not prevail upon himself to treat with so much severity a

queen who had defended the Roman provinces against the barbarians with great valour and intrepidity. Aurelian also pardoned the youngest of her sons, named Vaballath, who it is thought lived long after his mother's misfortune; but it is uncertain whether he put to death Herennianus and Timolaus, who had been declared Cæsars before Odenatus died, or whether these princes were already dead.

By Zenobia's capture and the reduction of Palmyra, Aurelian added greatly to the reputation he had before acquired. His name became the terror of the kings and people of the East. They all sent ambassadors and presents to him, to obtain his good graces; and it was observed that Hormisdas, King of Persia, and son of Sapor, who had so brutally treated Valerianus, was one of the first to do honour to Aurelian, by sending him a chariot covered with plates of gold, and enriched with jewels, together with a purple mantle of so extraordinary a lustre that the Romans had never seen anything comparable to it.

After the Emperor had restored tranquility to the East he set out for Italy, but was soon obliged to return. Some factious Palmyreans persuaded the inhabitants to revolt, massacred the garrison and the governor, proclaimed Emperor a relation of Zenobia, and caused him

to put on the imperial robe. This news put the Emperor out of all patience. He returned into Syria in such haste that he arrived at Antioch before the Palmyreans knew that he was informed of their rebellion. But his approach struck them with such fear and consternation that they yielded without attempting to defend themselves. Aurelian treated them with the utmost severity, put all the inhabitants to the sword without distinction of age or sex, and entirely demolished the town. This rigorous proceeding did not, however, prevent a new tyrant from starting up. Firmus, a native of Seleucia, but who lived in Egypt, where he was of considerable importance, and who was nearly related to Zenobia, undertook to head the remains of that party, and got himself proclaimed Emperor. His revolt was at first attended with success, for he made himself master of Alexandria and all Egypt, but in the end he met with the same fate that generally overtakes rebels; he was taken, and expiated his audacious attempt by a horrible death.

The destruction of this rebel again reduced Egypt to obedience, and served to give Tetricus warning of what he was to expect. That senator had been for some time past weary of the authority he had usurped, and had thought of making his peace with Aurelian. But it was not so easy for him to make his soldiers return to their

duty ; these men are always inclined to sedition, and, as he had been beholden to them for his elevation, they thought they had a right to exact what they pleased from him. A prey to those fears and apprehensions that are inseparable from an unlawful and tyrannical power, he preferred a private, but peaceable condition, to a tottering and precarious command. He went, therefore, and threw himself at the feet of Aurelian, to be dealt with as the Emperor pleased. The Emperor laid hold of this opportunity to attack the army of Tetricus ; he came up with it near Châlons upon the Marne, and cut them to pieces, for they fought without a chief, and, consequently, without discipline. By this victory Aurelian became master of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, which acknowledged Tetricus, and, after having put matters upon a satisfactory footing, he went to Rome to reap the fruits of his labours, and was received with the greatest applause and demonstrations of joy.

For a long time past the Romans had not seen so superb a triumph. The captives of several nations followed the triumphal chariot with their hands tied behind them, which sufficiently evinced the glory of the conqueror, but the principal ornament of this magnificent scene, and which most of all attracted the eyes of the spectators, was the Queen of the East, so loaded with

chains of gold, diamonds, pearls, and other precious jewels that she was scarcely able to carry them, but was forced, every now and then, to rest and take breath. Tetricus and his son, and some Egyptians of the highest rank, were captured at the defeat of Firmus, and the chief lords of Palmyra did also great honour to this splendid ceremony. It is true that some thought it indecent that the Emperor should cause a woman and a Roman senator, who had been consul, to grace the procession along with the Goths, Vandals, and other barbarians, but with regard to this Aurelian fully justified himself to the Senate.

Such was the fate of the celebrated Zenobia. Aurelian omitted nothing that could contribute to the mitigation of her misfortune and the alleviation of her condition. He treated her with great respect, and made her a present of a fine estate near Tivoli, just by Hadrian's palace. Many are of opinion that her son Vaballath retired into Armenia, where Aurelian gave him a principality; it is, however, certain that she left a son at Rome of that name. Baronius seems to think that she became a Christian, and that Zenobius, bishop of Florence, who lived in great friendship with St. Ambrose, was descended from her family, but other credible historians contradict this.

The Emperor did everything to repair the affront he had put upon Tetricus, by treating him ever after with great kindness, sometimes calling him his colleague, and even giving him the title of Emperor.

SEVERINA,

WIFE OF AURELIAN.

Aurelian, of whom we have already spoken, was of very obscure birth, but his meanness was obliterated by his superior talents, his extraordinary merit, and by such great actions that nobody thought too much was done for him when he was made Emperor. He had excellent natural qualities, a robust and vigorous constitution, great courage, and a majestic deportment. He was vigilant, prudent, grave, a strict observer of military discipline; his great failing was cruelty, which made him inflict the severest punishments for the smallest faults. He put a great number of senators to death upon slight suspicions or accusations, without proof; and, under pretence of correcting abuses, he made a very bad use of the sovereign authority with which he was invested; for which reason it was said of him that he ought to have remained always a general, but never to have been Emperor—that he was a good physician, but drew too much blood.

He married Ulpia Severina, who, as some modern historians believe, and upon good grounds, was daughter of Ulpius Crinitus, who claimed to be descended from Trajan and whose virtues he had inherited. This alliance was advantageous to Aurelian; for as he was born without fortune, he found ample means in the generosity of his father-in-law, who adopted him, and shared his riches with him.

Severina was not handsome, but had a great soul, and noble inclinations. She accompanied her husband on all his expeditions, even when she was Empress, and did not a little contribute towards procuring him the affection of his troops, by a well-timed liberality, and her engaging behaviour to the meanest soldier. It is from inscriptions and medals that we have drawn the greatest part of what we have reported with regard to her; for the historians do not so much as tell us her name.

As soon as Aurelian was proclaimed Emperor, he set himself about regulating public affairs, which were in great disorder and confusion. He carried his arms into the East with so much success that all the strongholds, and even provinces, submitted of their own accord, for fear of incurring his displeasure and feeling the effects of his anger. Only the city of Tyana attempted to make any resistance; but that was done with so much

courage and obstinacy as would in all probability have put a stop to his conquests, had it not been for the treachery of one of the inhabitants who opened the gates to him.[1]

It was a strange sight for the legions to see the Empress in the midst of camps and armies, sharing the fatigues of the war with the Emperor, preferring the noise and tumult of arms to the luxuries and pleasures of Rome, and doing honour to her sex by military exploits. This, together with her bounty, procured her the regard and affection of the legions; they could not but esteem a princess who distributed her riches among them, instead

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[1] Aurelian was so provoked at the obstinacy of the citizens that he swore he would not leave a dog alive. This oath made the soldiers believe that the Emperor intended to destroy the inhabitants and give up the town to be plundered. This expectation made them perform prodigies of valour, which notwithstanding would have been to little purpose had it not been for a townsman, named Heraclammon, who showed the Romans a weak part in the fortifications, through which they might enter the place. As soon as it was taken, the soldiers prepared to destroy and plunder it entirely, and when the Emperor opposed it, they put him in mind of his oath. "Very well," replied Aurelian, "I swore that I would not leave a dog alive in Tyana, so I consent that you shall massacre all the dogs." The perfidious Heraclammon was, however, put to death as the reward of his treason; for the Emperor said that a man who could betray his country could never be faithful to anyone.

of wasting it, as other Empresses had done, in show and grandeur. These largesses were of great service in keeping quiet the mutinous and seditious dispositions of the soldiers, which had always been a most difficult matter. The Senate, to show their gratitude to the Empress, and express their sense of her merit, caused a medal to be struck in honour of her, with an inscription, which attributes to her the glory of having won the hearts of the soldiers, and of maintaining peace and harmony among the legions.

This was not the only mark of esteem the Romans bestowed upon her ; for, when Aurelian went to Rome to receive the reward of his good services, she shared with the Emperor all the honours that were decreed him ; and there had never been seen at Rome a more magnificent triumph,[1] which was celebrated amidst the sincerest acclamations of the people and all classes in the city. To this was added all the games and shows that had ever been exhibited upon the like occasions, besides a naval engagement that was carried out with the greatest magnificence. Thus Aurelian, by entertaining the citizens with these amusements, caused the past sufferings and calamities to be forgotten.

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[1] Vopisc. in Aurel.

After this, the Emperor thought it right to give a token of his piety as well as his grandeur, by erecting a very sumptuous temple, and dedicating it to the sun, a divinity which he revered with great superstition, and to which he attributed all the success of his arms. Severina also took part in this ceremony, and in concert with her husband paid her homage to the god in the new temple. It was upon this occasion that the solemn sacrifice which was offered to the sun (represented to us by the medals) was performed; so that Severina's piety ingratiated her as much with the citizens as her military accomplishments did with the troops.

A woman of this character certainly deserved the love and affection of her husband, and accordingly the Emperor thought he could never too highly esteem a princess who followed his fortunes with so much courage and alacrity, sharing with him all his dangers and troubles, and contributing so much to his glory and safety by being liberal to the soldiers, and that with such grace that they were more charmed with her manner of giving than with the gift itself. Severina, however, with all her merit, could never persuade the Emperor to be polite and complaisant, or to abate anything of a certain rusticity which he always affected; and she had the mortification of being refused a favour she earnestly requested of him.

Though purple was, at the time of the republic, the colour most in fashion among all the ladies of quality, it was afterwards reserved for the Emperors only, and became a badge of the sovereign authority, so that edicts were issued to prohibit private persons from making use of it. The ladies were, indeed, permitted to wear silk, but it was at that time so scarce and dear that very few could venture to carry their luxury so far.

Severina, by accompanying her husband in all his wars, had acquired a martial air which she was very proud of, and fancied that a purple mantle of pure silk would add to her natural liveliness and vivacity, so that she longed exceedingly to purchase one.

This piece of finery could not be reckoned an immoderate expense for the first lady in the world, who, one would imagine, was not so strictly bound by general rules; nor could Aurelian, without the utmost austerity, refuse that little satisfaction to a princess for whom he ought to have had more indulgence for many reasons; for, if anything could have induced him to deviate from his usual principles, it might reasonably have been presumed that he would do so upon this occasion. But Aurelian was too rigid to be influenced by motives of courtesy and good manners. The Empress employed all her solicitation to no purpose, for Aurelian still persisted

in his obstinacy. He represented to Severina that, by being clad in silk, she would lower the value of gold; for, though silk was very rare and curious, it ought not to be put in competition with the most precious of all metals.

Severina, who knew the Emperor was not a man to be easily dissuaded from his resolutions, was forced to acquiesce, and was the less suprised at this refusal, as it was not the first mortification of the kind she had met with; for upon his coming to the throne, he allowed his wife and daughter no other furniture than what he had given them when he was a private officer.[1]

This humour of the Emperor was not attributable to that kind of sordid avarice that causes some people to grudge every little expense. It is true that he was no friend to luxury and show, but yet he could not be accused of covetousness, as was plainly proved by the use he made of his riches. The fault that might justly be imputed to him was that he did not know when to set bounds to his unreasonable severity, which made him a tyrant to the Senate as well as a persecutor of his own family, which he overwhelmed with affliction by putting his sister's son to death; and those who have been most zealous in their commendation of Aurelian, and have

[1] Vopisc. in Aurel.

compared him to Cæsar and Alexander (whose military talents he indeed possessed) have not been able to excuse his inhumanity. By his excessive rigour he alienated from him the hearts of the Romans, who hated his government. This occasioned the conspiracy against him, by which he lost his life near Byzantium, when he was going to war with the Persians.

Severina was witness of her husband's misfortunes, and did not long survive them. She had by Aurelian one daughter, who was the mother of that Aurelian who, in the time of Constantine the Great, was one of the most illustrious ornaments of the Senate; and this is all that historians relate concerning Severina.

THE WIFE OF TACITUS.

JULIA PROCLA,

WIFE OF PROBUS.

MAGNIA URBICA,

WIFE OF CARUS.

The legions, notwithstanding Aurelian's severity, regretted his death extremely, and refused to choose a successor for fear of selecting one of his murderers. The army sent the Senate a letter full of his praises and imprecations against those who had put him to death, and desiring that they would make choice of one of their body who should be worthy to fill his place. The Senate was too well acquainted with the changeable and fickle temper of the soldiers, and knew too well the aversion they always had to such Emperors as had been created by them to expose any senator to the caprice of the troops. They had not forgotten the tragical deaths of Balbinus and Pupienus, who were brutally massacred only because they had received the sovereign authority from the Senate; and the miserable end of those two princes gave them to understand what any Emperor had

to expect who was not chosen by the army. These prudent reflections determined the Senate to request that the legions would elect whomsoever they should judge most deserving of the throne.

These mutual differences between the Senate and the army took up six months, and yet during this sort of interregnum the provinces all remained quiet and submissive to the authority of the Senate. But at last couriers arrived with the news that the Germans had passed the Rhine, and that the Syrians, no longer in awe of Aurelian, were beginning to revolt. The consul, Gordianus, accordingly assembled the Senate, and represented to them that the election of an Emperor could no longer be deferred. Tacitus, whose age and quality gave him a right to speak first, rising up to give his opinion, all the Senate with one consent voted him the empire, saying that he who was at the head of the Senate ought also to be at the head of the armies.

Tacitus, who was a very wise and judicious person, excused himself by alleging that a magistrate who had passed his whole life at Court and in the Senate, and who was upon the brink of the grave, was not capable of undergoing the fatigues of war, and that the legions would never be brought to obey a senator who was become an Emperor at once, without having passed

through the military grades; this modesty only made him appear more worthy of it, and as to his great age, they mentioned Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus, who had come to the throne when they were very old. They told him that it was not his business to fight, but to command, and that strength of body was not so necessary a qualification in an Emperor as a sound judgment, according to the maxim of Severus, who used to say that it is the head that commands and not the body, and that it was ridiculous to give the title of Father of the State to boys, who stand in need of their tutors' lessons; that a ripe age produced wise and well concerted designs, whereas all the irregularities of Nero, Commodus and Heliogabalus were less to be attributed to their vices than to their youth.

The importunity of the Senate and the soundness of their arguments prevailed upon Tacitus at last to accept the empire, but he protested that he would do nothing of himself. The Senate could not certainly have made a more worthy choice, for in Tacitus were revived the moderation and integrity of those wise senators who were so remarkable in ancient Rome. If he was descended from Tacitus the historian, as is generally believed, he was of distinguished family, but, be that as it may, his merit sufficiently recommended him. As for his wife, no

mention is made either of her name, family, or country. She found in Tacitus the same aversion to luxury that Severina met with in Aurelian, for her rank of Empress was the only thing that distinguished her from the other ladies. The Emperor, her husband, would never permit that she should wear richer clothes than she had before his election, for he was looked upon as the author of the prohibition which his predecessor had made against wearing gold or silver. It is not to be doubted but that the Senate decreed the new Empress all the honours that they had been so prodigal of to others, and that they gave the most pompous titles to the wife of an Emperor who was of their own creating. They wrote to the governors of provinces, and to all the nations and kings in alliance with the Romans, that the Senate had reassumed their ancient rights, that they would always, for the future, elect the Emperors, and that they had now made choice of one of their own members to fill the throne; that, from that time forth, it should be by authority of the Senate that war or peace should be declared, and, in a word, that the State, being reinstated in its privileges and prerogatives, intended to have the principal share in the government. The senators congratulated each other upon the recovery of their liberty, and they made an experiment that seemed to assure them

that neither the interest nor the will of the Emperor would any longer put a restraint upon their votes; for when Tacitus requested the consulship for his brother the Senate refused it. But this great joy was but of short duration, for Tacitus,[1] after having given the greatest proofs of his mildness, equity and justice, died of a fever, according to some, while, according to others, he was killed by some seditious soldiers.

Florianus, his brother, made himself Emperor as if he had had a right to succeed Tacitus; but he had to deal with a very powerful competitor in Probus, who was chosen by the majority of the soldiers, and whose merit greatly alarmed him. He knew that Probus was extremely beloved and esteemed by the Senate, the legions, and the people, and consequently that it would be very difficult to maintain himself in a dignity which a more worthy person than himself was in possession of; so the rash step he had taken was followed by another still more so, for he put himself to death by causing his veins to be opened.

Never did the troops make a choice that was so universally applauded, for the virtues of Probus eclipsed all those of his predecessors; so many good qualities had

[1] Eutrop. Aurel, Vict.

never been united in the same person. The sovereign authority only added to their lustre, by making them appear in a more favourable light.

For a long time it was not known that Probus ever had a wife, but Strada affirms that he did marry one Julia Procla,[1] whose family and country, as well as her good and bad qualities, were not mentioned. It is hard to say upon what grounds he builds his assertion that there ever was an Empress of that name. We find, nevertheless, that Probus left children behind him, who settled near Verona; but it nowhere appears that his wife's name was Julia Procla; he certainly had a sister called Claudia.

The reign of Probus was one continued series of victories. When he had punished the authors of Aurelian's death, he marched against the rebellious Gauls, and destroyed above seven hundred thousand of those barbarians. He subdued the Illyrians and the Getans, both which nations he compelled to submit to the Roman yoke. The East was afterwards the theatre of his triumphs, where he took an infinite number of strongholds, and defeated the Persians, who had so often rebelled. He would have utterly extirpated them, when he was massacred by some soldiers at Sirmium.

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[1] Tristan. Comment. Historiq.

Marcus Aurelius Carus was elected in his stead. He was of Narbonne in Languedoc, and possessed the same virtues for which Aurelian, Tacitus, and Probus had been so much esteemed.

Magnia Urbica, his wife, is known only by her medals, for history is silent as to her family, or where she was born. It is indeed acknowledged that there was an Empress called Magnia Urbica, for there are medals which give her the title of August, and on which she is represented with her two children standing before her. The difficulty is to know which Emperor she was wife of, because authors do not agree in that point; but, all circumstances considered, it seems plain that she was the wife of Carus and that the two children represented in the medals were Carinus and Numerianus, her sons. Numerianus had all his father's good qualities, but Carinus gave himself up to all manner of vices, so that the former was the delight of the army and the people, whilst the other, by his monstrous debaucheries, became the object of their aversion. All met with tragic deaths. Carus was killed by lightning upon the banks of the Tigris near Ctesiphon. Numerianus was assassinated in his litter by Aper, his father-in-law, who intended to seize the empire, and Carinus, after having several times defeated Diocletian, whom the army had chosen Emperor, was killed by an officer whose wife he had debauched.

PRISCA,

WIFE OF DIOCLETIAN.

VALERIA,

WIFE OF GALERIUS.

EUTROPIA,

WIFE OF HERCULES.

THE WIFE OF MAXIMINUS.

FORTUNE respects neither rank nor grandeur, and the most exalted throne is no security against changes and revolutions. The Empresses Prisca and Valeria are proofs of this assertion. We shall see these two princesses, wives of the masters of the world, become wanderers and fugitives, reduced to all the misfortunes of a cruel destiny, and at last ending their lives by a violent death—a melancholy example of the instability and precariousness of everything in this world!

Nothing positive can be said about the family or country of the Empress Prisca. The historians do not even agree about her name. Some call her Alexandra, others Serena, and others again Eleuthera. It is not impossible that

she might have had all those names, but it is certain that she was also called Prisca, and she is generally known by that name.

The ecclesiastical annalist speaks of her by the name of Serena, and makes her a Christian. He also asserts that she died a quiet and natural death, and that the Empress Valeria, her daughter, did the same, soon after she had married Galerius Maximinus. This he infers from there being no further mention made of her by ancient authors. We cannot hold the same opinion as Baronius, nor the Acts of Saint Susanna, upon which he grounds his authority, because it does not appear that they are more to be credited than Lactantius, who affirms the contrary, and who not only lived at that time, but held a post in Constantine's Court.

Tristan, in his Historical Commentaries, believes that Diocletian's wife, whom he calls Serena, was daughter of Serenus, who held then one of the most important posts at Rome. Be that as it may, Prisca was a woman of such extraordinarily good qualities that it is reasonable to suppose she had some knowledge of the Christian religion, and at least practised it secretly. The prudence of her conduct, her humility upon the throne, and the great patience with which she bore the different persecutions she met with, seem to be proofs of her having been well acquainted with those divine laws.

Diocletian, who acquitted himself with honour in all his military duties, had by Prisca, his wife, a daughter called Valeria, whose beauty, though very great, did not do her so much honour as her virtue and the regularity of her life. She was educated by the Empress with all possible care and exactness, and instructed in the Christian religion. She followed very strictly the excellent example her mother gave her, and showed that the good lessons that had been taught her were not thrown away, but on the contrary produced excellent fruit.

After the death of Numerianus, the Roman army that had been led into Persia by the Emperor Carus chose Diocletian, who passed for one of the greatest generals of his time, and was thought the most capable of governing and defending the empire. He was born in Dalmatia, of a very obscure family. He was reckoned a great but very wicked Prince,[1] and in fact had many vices mixed with extraordinary talents. He was of commanding stature, had a grave and majestic air, but a rude and disagreeable countenance, was close and reserved, and a great master of dissimulation, always forming important designs, and never executing them till after he had well

[1] Eutrop. Dioclet.

weighed and considered the consequences. He was generally victorious in war, and could never be accused of having failed by his own fault. He was so fertile in expedients that in the most desperate circumstances, and such as seemed to be past all remedy, some resource or other was sure to present itself to his superior genius. He was nobly jealous of the glory of the empire, and so encouraged arts and learning that he deserved the pompous title that was given him of Restorer of the Golden Age. Before he was Emperor he used to say that nothing was more difficult than to reign well, and he afterwards justified this maxim by his conduct; for though he had resolved to imitate Marcus Antoninus he fell far short of his model, and exhibited scarcely any of the virtues of that great Emperor. He was, indeed, so far master of his passions that he knew how to curb and restrain them, but this victory was owing to his policy, not to his virtue. He endeavoured to impose upon the public, and succeeded, for he was thought exempt from vice because he had the art of concealing it. He set no bounds to his pride, for he caused the same honours to be paid him that were given to the gods. His vanity was so conspicuous in the luxury and splendour of his apparel that even his shoes were covered with jewels. He was also so avaricious that, in order to heap up

money, he did not scruple to commit the most flagrant acts of injustice,[1] but was cunning enough to throw the shame and odium of them upon his agents and instruments, who had acted by his order.

As soon as Diocletian was proclaimed Emperor, the Senate, according to custom, conferred upon Prisca the title of August, which honour rather increased her humility than otherwise, and showed that there are some few persons in the world of such exalted souls as not to be influenced or corrupted by grandeur and high stations. It is not known whether Prisca accompanied her husband when he went to Rome to have his election confirmed; but it is generally believed that she was in the East when Diocletian associated in the empire his old friend Maximianus, who took the surname of Hercules, who, indeed, had served with credit under the preceding Emperors, but was of obscure extraction; this would have been no dishonour to him if he had not at the same time plunged into all the vices of the worst of tyrants. He was brutal in the highest degree, and so passionate that, in his fury, there was nothing too bad for him to be capable of. Never were the taxes collected with so much rigour and violence as in his reign. He was

[1] Lactan. de mortib. persecut.

covetous, unjust, without honour or conscience, suborning false witnesses against those whose riches he was resolved to be possessed of, and beyond measure debauched, so that all lawful pleasures were insipid to him. He did not scruple to carry off by force any young girls whom he took a fancy to, even in sight of their parents, whom he also compelled to be witnesses of their dishonour, so, as an historian has observed,[1] if his valour and military capacity rendered his progress terrible to his enemies, his incontinence made it not less so to women of virtue in those places through which he passed. His person was as deformed as his mind; he was of great size, but his coarse and savage features and countenance, together with his black thick beard, caused him to be looked upon with horror; so it was not to be wondered at, that with his forbidding aspect he was not able to gain the affections of his wife Eutropia; on the contrary, it would have been more surprising if that charming Syrian had not listened to the solicitations of a passionate and handsome lover, whose merit could not but place the imperfections of Hercules in a more disadvantageous light.

Galeria Valeria Eutropia was not exempt from those

[1] Lactan. de mortib. persecut. c.8.

vices to which her nation was subject. Some authors say she was nearly related to Eutropius, father of the Emperor Constantius.[1] She possessed great beauty, a cheerful temper, and an amorous temperament, and was very fond of pleasures and diversions. She was married very young to a Syrian, whose name and family are not mentioned; the fruit of this marriage was Theodora, whom we shall see upon the throne. Her husband died soon after the birth of her daughter.

Eutropia's beauty suffered nothing from her deep mourning, on the contrary it seemed to be rather heightened, for it is not probable that her countenance was of a piece with her dress. Nobody is more disposed to receive comfort than a young and amiable widow, whose vivacity and liveliness is naturally no friend to seriousness and grief, and who is surrounded by a crowd of admirers, vying with each other who shall be the first to make amends for her loss. A lover full of life and sprightliness soon obliterates the remembrance of a dead husband, for people are soon weary of fighting in vain after a shadow, and wasting their tears upon an object that can only amuse their imagination. Eutropia paid such

[1] Julian. Cæsar. 1. Victor. Epit.

respect to the memory of her husband as fashion and the rules of decency required, but did not think herself obliged to carry on the farce further than she was obliged; she therefore looked out for a new conquest, and was so fortunate as to make a very illustrious one. Hercules, notwithstanding his rough and unpolished disposition, was far from being insensible to the power of beauty. He was captivated by her charms, and soon found means to let her know it.

Hercules, as we have observed, had a most disagreeable appearance, and was more calculated to inspire fear than love; his mind was as uncultivated as his person, so that he was quite incapable of carrying on his amours gallantly, but his fortune spoke for him, and the lustre of the imperial purple made at least as deep an impression upon the heart of Eutropia as the greatest accomplishments could have done. Sovereign authority is a sort of veil that effectually eclipses the imperfections of whoever is invested with it. A lover who wears a crown is always well received, and the eyes of his mistress, being fixed upon that splendid mark of his dignity, have not time to wander about to spy out the faults and deformities of his person; for this reason, although Eutropia had an infinite number of adorers, between whom and Hercules there was no sort of comparison as to real

merit, yet he had the preference, as being most capable of gratifying her ambition.

Reasons of State might possibly have weighed so far with the Emperor as to induce him to marry Eutropia, especially if it be true that she was related to Eutropius, and consequently to Constantius, his son. The Emperors made a point of marrying into their own families, for we shall find that when Constantius was associated in the imperial dignity, he was obliged to divorce his wife Helena to marry the daughter-in-law of Hercules; thus Diocletian, having formed the design of placing Constantius upon the throne, who was every day rendering important services to the State, it is very probable that he persuaded Hercules to marry Eutropia in order to unite them beforehand to the Emperors by this alliance. However it was, this was the first time that two Empresses were seen reigning at the same time.

It is true that Faustina, wife of Marcus Aurelius, and Lucilla, wife of Lucius Verus, enjoyed at once the same dignity, as did afterwards Julia, wife of Severus, and Plautilla, wife of Caracalla, but we have observed that this last was not looked upon by Caracalla as his wife, because Severus his father compelled him to marry her; she lived at Court only as daughter of Plautianus, and not as wife of the prince, nor had she any sort of influence

or interest. As to Faustina and Lucilla, the mother always maintained a superiority over the daughter; Lucilla could not be jealous of the honours conferred upon her mother, nor could Faustina envy her daughter the respect that was paid her, since it was of her own procuring. But when Faustina died, and Commodus had married Crispina, the case was altered. As she was then Empress, she claimed singly all the honours that were used to be given to the Emperors' wives, and which, she said, nobody could claim but the reigning Empress; she refused to share them with her sister-in-law, who thought she had a right to them as widow of an Emperor, and we have drawn attention to the confusions and quarrels that were occasioned at Court in consequence of the perpetual jealousies between these two princesses.

Prisca was not at all uneasy upon this account; she saw with great indifference Hercules's wife seated with her upon the throne, whereas Eutropia regarded the matter very differently. Prisca being guided by virtue and good sense, and perhaps by the pure maxims of the Christian religion, was an ornament to her rank and her station, and led such a life as was exempt from all suspicions and censures; Eutropia, on the contrary, indulged in such indecencies as were not at all to the advantage of her reputation. When she first came to the throne she

indeed acted very cautiously, but the characteristics of her nation, added to her own natural temperament, soon prevailed, and she gave herself up to pleasures; and, however the fury and resentment of Hercules was to be dreaded, that did not hinder her from being extremely fond of a Syrian, who, being polite and agreeable, found the secret of insinuating himself into her good graces. A woman has a great deal more complaisance for a man of her own country than another, and such a one will always have a great advantage over a stranger. We cannot help leaning towards such a person, for there is implanted in everybody's heart a certain national partiality, that inclines us, whether we will or not, to give him the preference. Eutropia had this feeling for the handsome Syrian, nor had she virtue or resolution enough to withstand the solicitations of a lover who had everything she desired to recommend him.

Eutropia had been married some years to Hercules without having a child, which afflicted him very much,[1] for he was extremely desirous to have heirs. The Empress knew this, and it did not a little contribute to persuade her to an intrigue, which answered her expectations, for she became pregnant. This gave the

[1] Vita Constantin. Auctor. Anony.

Emperor all the satisfaction in the world, but, if anything were wanting to make it complete, it was the fear of having a daughter; his desires were, however, accomplished by Eutropia's being delivered of a son, whom he called Maxentius. The credulous Emperor received this present with transports of joy, and caused this shameful production of his wife's libertinism to be educated with all possible care and expense.

Some authors, who are more favourable to the Empress,[1] say that Hercules passionately longed for a son to perpetuate his family, and seeing his wife with child, waited the event with great impatience, and that Eutropia, being brought to bed of a girl, cunningly substituted a boy in her place, in order to ingratiate herself with her husband. It must be acknowledged, for the honour of the Empress, that there are historians who will have it that Maxentius was really the son of Hercules. Be it as it may, the Emperor, who was more interested than anybody in the birth of this child, looked upon him as his son, and accordingly raised him afterwards to the throne.

When he himself was adopted by Diocletian as his colleague, that Emperor did not less consult his own

[1] Eutrop.

interest than the friendship he had for Hercules. He saw the provinces exposed to the incursions of barbarians and the usurpation of tyrants, and, as it is impossible for one Emperor to oppose so many enemies at once, he was very glad to be eased of part of the burden by choosing a partner. Hercules had proved himself capable of answering his expectations, for, having been sent against Ælianus and Amandus, who had put themselves at the head of a band of robbers in Gaul, he dispersed in a very short time that dangerous faction, but at the same time demonstrated his cruelty by inhumanly ordering the entire Theban legion to be massacred. It was composed of Christians, and commanded by Maurice, an experienced general, who knew how to give Cæsar his right, but was not a man to prefer Cæsar to God, or to make his fortune at the expense of his religion. Hercules being about to offer a sacrifice to his gods to render them propitious to his designs, Maurice, as well as the officers and soldiers of his troop, not being able to prevail upon themselves to join in this idolatry, stood aside, that they might not be partakers in those abominations. The Emperor, hurried on by his superstition to revenge his despised deities, thought he could not take a better method to appease them than by putting Maurice to death; and in order to intimidate the soldiers by

punishing a great many, decimated them. Those upon whom the lot fell showed so much joy in imitating their leader, and suffered the punishment to which they were condemned with such surprising intrepidity, that the tyrant, provoked at seeing himself overcome by these martyrs, put the whole legion to the sword.

This act of violence was, as it were, the signal of the persecution that was then kindled against the Church, which was one of the most terrible that had ever been known, for the oracle of Apollo having been consulted, answered that the just persons of the earth hindered it from speaking. It was not doubted that by this was meant the Christians, so it was resolved that they should be extirpated. Diocletian, who was most superstitiously jealous of the honour of his gods, began with his own family, and the first act of the persecution was committed in his palace.

The Empress Prisca, having the greatest veneration for the Christian religion, had taken care to inspire the Princess Valeria, her daughter, with the same sentiments, and if they did not profess it publicly they were at least Christians at heart. It is difficult to imagine that Diocletian was quite ignorant of the leaning these two princesses had to Christianity. Their neglect of the Roman deities and their compassion for the persecuted

Christians might have made him suspect that they paid their adoration elsewhere; nor can it be supposed that they could keep so strict a guard upon their whole behaviour as not to reveal the favourable opinion they entertained of a religion that the Emperor abhorred. His affection for his wife and daughter had made him often hesitate what to do, and had frequently induced him to delay the execution of what the heathen priests had assured him it was his duty to do, rather than give offence to persons he so tenderly loved. But as soon as the oracle had roused his superstition by appearing unfavourable to the Christians, he formed the design of abolishing Christianity entirely, and of causing his gods to be universally worshipped, especially Jupiter and Hercules; and in order the better to pay his court to them, he imagined that he ought to compliment them in the first place with the lives of the chief persons in the empire.

Diocletian's conduct in this affair seems to have been extremely imprudent, and not of a piece with his behaviour in other respects, for he seldom did anything of consequence without having well weighed and considered it. It cannot but be acknowledged that he was very fond of his only daughter, as well as of his wife, who was so deserving of his esteem and affection; but

by commanding them to assist at the sacrifice he exposed himself to the cruel necessity of either permitting his gods to be despised by the refusal of these princesses to offer incense to those fabulous divinities, or else of being compelled to expiate the contempt at the expense of those lives which were so valuable to him.

This disagreeable alternative did not, however, change his resolution, for the unbounded respect he had for his gods prevailed; he was of opinion that nothing ought to enter into rivalry with them, and thought his family should be the first to show an example of their submission to his orders, and of their zeal for the tutelary gods of the State.

This might have been a happy conjuncture for the princesses, who were thereby furnished with a fair opportunity of ennobling their names and doing honour to their faith, by refusing to pay to false deities that worship and adoration which they knew belonged only to the true God. But whether they were terrified at the threats of the Emperor, whose fury was never so dreadful as when he was to revenge any slight put upon his gods, or whether it was that the princesses were not sufficiently instructed in the principles of their religion, which commands us to confess its Divine Author, even in the midst of tortures, before the potentates and tyrants of

the earth, and not to fear those who can only kill the body—whatever was the reason, they had not resolution enough to overcome the powerful temptation, but were so weak as to conform to the command of Diocletian, and offer, externally, the sacrifice which their hearts condemned them for. They preferred to their salvation a life that they seemed to have preserved only to pass in grief and bitterness, for, by avoiding the present evil, they drew upon themselves a worse and more lasting one. The bad example of the two princesses had indeed but too many imitators, but there were a great number of good Christians, upon whom it made no bad impression, and who cheerfully sealed their faith with their blood. Even the Emperor's palace served as a stage for the triumph of some of his officers, who bore with a serene countenance and intrepidity which was not to be shaken either by threats or promises, the utmost efforts of his rage. Sebastianus especially, a captain of the Prætorian Guards, who was distinguished by his extraordinary merit, made a noble confession of his faith in presence of the whole Court, and confounded his persecutors by suffering martyrdom, not only with courage and patience, but with joy and pleasure.

The Emperors did not, however, reap from this cruelty the advantage they expected, nor were they able to

procure peace and tranquility to the empire by appeasing the gods with torrents of blood, as they flattered themselves. The Christians were exposed to all the miseries and torments that the malice of men or devils could invent, but that did not hinder new revolts from creating new wars in all the provinces, so that the sovereign authority was never in so much danger of being totally overthrown. Carausius rebelled in Britain, where he made himself an absolute tyrant. The Persians, conducted by Narses their king, made irruptions all over the East. Egypt had chosen a new master in the person of Achilles, who had caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor at Alexandria, and even Italy groaned under the unlimited and independent power that Julianus had assumed ; so that it looked as if all these enemies had arisen by common consent against the empire in order to divide it amongst them.

Diocletian and Hercules, finding so much upon their hands, resolved to take other colleagues who should be as much interested in defending the empire as themselves. They therefore gave the dignity of Cæsar to Galerius and Constantius, generals who were quite capable of humbling the rebels, and protecting the provinces they should be entrusted with. The former was the son of a peasant of Illyria. Romula, his mother, had an implacable hatred

of the Christians, which she took care to instil into her son, the poisonous leaven of which fermented only too readily in his heart. He had in his youth been brought up as a shepherd, but afterwards took up the profession of arms, in which he became very skilful and had great success. However, neither the air of the army nor his long residence at Court were able to rub off the rust he had contracted, so that, in the most exalted stations, he still retained his former lack of polish. To tell the truth, he was a good officer, but (that excepted) he had not one commendable quality. There was something dark and gloomy in his countenance that sufficiently showed the sourness of his mind; and his loud, harsh voice, wild look, and continual frown inspired everybody with aversion to his person. He had the vices of the worst of the Emperors, and indulged them with the utmost brutality. As he was cruel and inflexible, he could never be prevailed upon to temper justice with mercy, a virtue so necessary to princes. His vanity surpassed that of the Emperors who were most accused of it; for, notwithstanding his base extraction, he carried his pride so far that, not content with being above other men in point of rank, he also claimed a superiority with respect to his family and origin, giving out that he was the son of Mars, who, he said, in the form of a dragon, had had connection

with his mother, being very willing to dishonour her by so monstrous a union, rather than not be thought of illustrious descent. Besides all this, he was so covetous that, in order to gratify his insatiable avarice, he made all the provinces groan under the intolerable burden of his extortions.

Flavius Constantius was son of Eutropius, one of the greatest lords of Dardania, and of Claudia, daughter of Crispus, brother of the Emperor Claudius the Goth,[1] and he honoured his nobility by the greatest virtues, especially sweetness of temper, affability, and the most engaging behaviour. He never filled his coffers with the riches of the provinces; for it was a maxim of his that it was much better the gold should circulate among the people than be treasured up by the prince. He had acquired so great a reputation in the army that Carus judged him worthy of the empire. Before the title of Cæsar was conferred on him, he married Helena, but he was forced to divorce her, conformably to the will of Hercules and Diocletian, who obliged him to marry Theodora, daughter of Eutropia.

About this time Maximianus Galerius married the Princess Valeria; and it is very probable that when Diocletian gave her to him he did not much consult the inclinations of his daughter, for it is certain that

[1] So called from his victory over the Goths.

Galerius had none of the qualifications that were necessary to make him acceptable to so accomplished a lady. In his first wife's time he had led a most dissolute life, nor were matters much better after his marriage with Valeria, for he had a favourite mistress whom he preferred infinitely to her. It is true that the princess did not take this affront much to heart, for her virtue and good disposition made her unsusceptible to jealousy. She not only submitted to his ill treatment without complaining, but even showed him marks of esteem and affection of which he was by no means worthy ; for, finding that she had no children,she adopted Candidianus, her husband's natural son.

By the creation of these new Cæsars there were four Empresses upon the throne. To all appearance Prisca, who was the oldest of them, preserved a kind of superiority over the rest. The other Emperors owed their fortunes to Diocletian, and gratitude required that their Empresses should yield the precedence to the wife of their benefactor. They were not, however, much exposed to the jealousy and disputes that are generally occasioned by equality of rank and condition, for the Emperors having divided the provinces that each might protect his own part against the barbarians and tyrants, the Empresses accompanied their husbands, and each in

her own territory enjoyed all the honours that are combined with the supreme authority.

Galerius marched against the Persians, who had already conquered Mesopotamia. His first campaign was not successful, for he was defeated by the barbarians. Diocletian heard this news with great vexation; he was so out of humour with his son-in-law, and gave him so cold a reception[1] that he allowed Galerius to follow his litter on foot for half an hour, though he was clothed in the imperial purple, the lustre of which only served to augment his confusion. This misfortune did not, however, discourage Galerius, for he raised another powerful army, and attacked the Persians again. The Empress Valeria accompanied him in this expedition, and shared with him the fatigue and the honour of it; she even greatly facilitated the victory he obtained over the enemy, for, as Diocletian[2] was very fond of his daughter, she employed all her influence with him to procure everything that was necessary to enable Galerius to carry on the war with success, and so won the hearts of the soldiers by her liberality that they were all ready to lay down their lives to re-establish the reputation of

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[1] Ammian. Marcel. lib. 14, Eutrop.

[2] Tristan. Comment. Histor.

the Roman arms. By these means Galerius defeated the Persians in Armenia, and Narses, their King, was put to flight, abandoning to the conquerer his Queen, sisters, children, and treasure, together with his camp and equipage. The Romans retook all that they had lost the year before, and if Galerius had been at liberty to have pushed his good fortune as he at first intended he would have absolutely destroyed the Persian empire. But Diocletian's jealousy was a piece of good fortune for the barbarians. He saw with envy the laurels with which Galerius was covered, and recalled him, pretending that it was high time for him to take some repose after his labours, and enjoy the honour of the triumph that was preparing for him.

Constantius in the meantime met with the like vicissitudes of fortune in Gaul. He was first surprised and beaten by the enemy, but afterwards defeated them near Langres.[1] Hercules subdued the Africans; and Diocletian having humbled the tyrant Achilles, made himself master of all Egypt; so that the four Emperors had the honour of re-establishing the fortunes of the State. The Senate decreed them a triumph, and Diocletian, accompanied by Hercules, went to Rome to reap the fruits of his victories. The Empress Eutropia undertook the journey with her husband, though she was pregnant. She had never been at

[1] The ancient *Civitas Lingonum*.

Rome, and passionately longed to see the capital of the world. She was there brought to bed of a daughter, who was named Fausta; this was a new subject of joy to the city, and added very much to the splendour and magnificence of the triumph. It was celebrated with extraordinary pomp, and all classes strove to out-do each other by the most flattering language upon this occasion. The Empress Valeria had the satisfaction of sharing all these honours with her husband, for the Senate, who were very assiduous in obtaining the good graces of Diocletian, for whom the other Cæsars had the greatest deference and respect, did not think they could pay their court to him more effectually than by conferring upon his only daughter the honours that had been granted to preceding Empresses, especially since she was so deserving of them. Besides the proud title of Mother of the Armies, with which none but the most illustrious of the Empresses had been dignified, they decreed her a crown of laurel, a glorious and special privilege that had never before been bestowed upon any woman, in consideration of her having had so large a share in and so much contributed to her husband's military exploits. They did not stop there, for, in order to immortalise her name and memory, they gave the name of Valeria to that part of Pannonia which is between the Drave and the Danube.[1] Thus

[1] Ammian. lib. 19.

liberal of her favours was Fortune to the princess, giving her no hint of the bitter afflictions that were soon to overtake her.

Diocletian, after the example of other Emperors, entertained the people with shows and diversions, but in so mean a way that, instead of gaining their esteem and affection, it afforded ample matter for raillery and ridicule, whereupon he was so affronted that he left Rome and went to Ravenna in such bad weather that he contracted a disorder, which emaciated his body and so enfeebled his mind that he was out of his senses for a considerable time. This accident made his colleagues lose a great deal of the respect they had hitherto shown him, and Galerius, his son-in-law, was the first who gave signs of this. For a long time past the submission that he had been forced to render to Diocletian had gone much against the grain with him. His late victory had so puffed him up that he imagined himself the only person capable of governing, and looked upon Diocletian and Hercules as old and worn out. He flattered himself that it would not be impossible for him to persuade them to abdicate, and then thought he could easily manage Constantius. He omitted nothing that he supposed necessary to carry out this project, but did not, at first, find them so ready to gratify him as he could have

wished. People are not so eager to condemn themselves to a private life after having tasted the sweets of power and sóvereignty; nor is it so easy for those who have been used to command to submit to a voluntary obedience. The two Emperors struggled a long time against all the efforts of Galerius, but were at last so intimidated by his threatening letters that, to avoid a civil war, they were forced to divest themselves of their dignity.

Diocletian did this with a great deal of solemnity. He assembled at Nicomedia all the officers of his army and the great men of his Court, and told them with tears in his eyes that his infirmities would not permit him to support the fatigues of war any longer, wherefore he was determined to give up his share of the government to his colleagues, who had all the talents that were required for so important a trust, and were in the prime of life. He added that Hercules had formed the same design. After a very moving speech he quitted the purple, assumed the garb of a private person, and retired to Salona, a town in Dalmatia. Hercules went through the same ceremony at Milan, and, no doubt, with the same regret; after which he went to Rome in his private capacity. Diocletian desired that Constantine (son of Constantius) and

Maxentius, who passed for the son of Hercules, should be created Cæsars, but Galerius, who intended to make himself sole Empèrôr, opposed it. He was, nevertheless, obliged to accept those two princes for his colleagues, for Constantius when he was dying at York, named Constantine his successor, and Maxentius took upon himself that dignity of his own authority, causing himself to be proclaimed Emperor.

By the abdication of Diocletian and Hercules the Empresses Prisca and Eutropia found themselves deprived of their dignity. It is more than probable that they did not quit it with a very good grace, for ladies do not generally submit to a degradation without some sighs. Be that as it may, it appears that it was not long before Hercules repented of the step he had taken, for being soon weary of a private life he reassumed the insignia of sovereign authority, and again increased the number of Cæsars. He would fain have prevailed upon Diocletian to imitate him, and sent a nobleman of his Court to urge him to do so, but Diocletian very prudently rejected the proposal. He declared to the envoy that he infinitely preferred the tranquility of his retreat to the hurry and bustle of a Court, and in his letter he says:— "I wish that you were at Salona to see my garden, and the herbs that I have planted with my own hands; you

would not then endeavour to entice me away from my agreeable retirement, to embroil myself afresh in affairs of State."

Of all the rivals and competitors of Galerius, Maxentius seemed to him the most formidable. This prince was full of ambitious designs, capable of forming vast projects, and, believing himself the son of Hercules, thought he had a right to aspire to the empire. As he did not receive his authority from anybody, but had seized it of himself, Galerius treated him as a usurper, and sent Severus with an army against him, who, having attacked Maxentius, was put to flight and forced to take shelter at Ravenna. Hercules ordered him to be executed, though he had promised to save his life.

This piece of treachery furnished Galerius with a pretence to declare war against Hercules, and in order to be the better able to carry it on with success he took Licinius as a colleague. Hercules, being alarmed at the number of his enemies, endeavoured to procure the assistance of Constantine, and to that end gave him his daughter Fausta in marriage, but notwithstanding this close alliance he soon formed very black designs against the life of his son-in-law. But he was the dupe of his own artifices, for Constantine, having discovered the mischief that was hatching against him, drove Hercules to such

a pitch of despair that he killed himself. Galerius did not long survive him, but terminated by a shameful death a life which his cruelty and incontinence had made detestable. He was smitten with a horrible disease[1] in the most sensitive parts of his body, being devoured alive by worms, and such a stench proceeded from him as was offensive even to those who were without the palace.

The inexpressible noxiousness of this dreadful distemper did not hinder the Empress Valeria from attending her husband with all the care and affection that could have been expected from a woman who had met with the best treatment in the world, and giving such proofs of her dutifulness as he was in no sort deserving of. But the terrible and uncommon plague that he was afflicted with having obstinately resisted all the means that could be thought of for his recovery, he knew that he had nothing to expect but a miserable death. Then it was that he began to make dismal reflections upon his cruelty to the Christians, and issued an edict to put a stop to the persecutions he had set on foot against those poor innocent people, whose blood cried aloud for vengeance. At last, after having recommended his wife and Candidianus, his natural son, to the care of Licinius, he died without being regretted.

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[1] Lactan. de mortib. persecut.

As soon as Maximinus was informed of his death he set out for the East to take possession of those provinces that had fallen to the lot of his uncle. But Licinius would not admit his claims; and this dispute obliging them to have recourse to arms, they determined to decide it by a battle. Means were, however, found to adjust the difference, and then they mutually swore to live in friendship with each other. As the territories of Galerius had been the subject of their quarrel, Valeria, who was resolved to live quietly and free from disturbance, yielded to Maximinus everything that he had a right to as belonging to her husband; but Maximinus with great courtesy declined it, and insisted upon her enjoying the riches that Galerius had left her. He gave the most generous tokens of a sincere friendship and esteem, and even eagerly embraced every opportunity of contributing to her pleasure and satisfaction.

There being now no rancour or animosity between Licinius and Maximinus they both retired to their respective provinces; but before they separated they each of them offered Valeria a revenue suitable to her rank. She hesitated for a long time about what was best for her to do. She knew that Diocletian, her father, was drawing near his end, and that after his death neither Salona nor Nicomedia could be a place of safety

for her; she therefore thought it best to pass the remainder of her days either with Licinius or Maximinus, who, being beholden to her late husband for their fortunes, could not in honour and gratitude but have a particular regard for his widow, so all the difficulty lay in the choice she should make. On the one hand she recollected that her husband had very warmly recommended her to Licinius, which looked as if he had thereby declared his intention; but, on the other hand, she was not ignorant that Licinius had a very bad character, and was even afraid that, as she was not married, he might make her some disagreeable proposals that should be directly contrary to the resolution she had taken of passing the rest of her life in widowhood. These reasons determined her to put herself under the protection of Maximinus, who, being nephew to Galerius, would be most likely to treat with kindness and affection a person who had been the wife of his uncle and benefactor.

The Empress Prisca was so excessively fond of her daughter that she could not bear the thought of separating from her. Besides, she hoped to be more at liberty to practise the Christian religion with Maximinus than elsewhere; for, though she knew him to be no friend to Christianity in general, yet she could not suppose that she or her daughter were to be subject to the rigour of

whatever edicts he might issue against it. Diocletian did not think proper to oppose the princesses' design, for he had for a long time past been so used to solitude that he gave himself very little trouble about what was going on; his garden at Salona was all he cared for, and indeed, the disorders he was subject to would not permit him to employ himself in anything else. So he willingly consented to the departure of his wife and daughter. They were accompanied by Candidianus, natural son of Galerius, and Prince Severianus, son of the Emperor Flavius Valerius Severus.

These two princesses, by their virtue, beauty and merit, were the greatest ornaments of the Court. Prisca especially was highly esteemed for the prudence of her conduct; she never meddled with any State affairs, but passed her time in the performance of the duties of the religion she secretly practised. Valeria was yet in the height of her beauty, which was in a great measure owing to her having had no children; her modesty set off her charms, and the mourning habit, which she never quitted, added to her charms instead of having a contrary effect.

Maximinus at first behaved with the greatest politeness and civility to the two princesses. He showed Prisca all the deference and respect that was due to her age and

quality, and treated Valeria as a kind and dutiful son would a good mother. The princesses thought themselves so happy that it was not in the power of anything to add to their felicity, congratulated each other upon their good fortune in having preferred Maximinus to Licinius, and were far from regretting their former condition. As they were entirely their own mistresses, and at liberty to do whatever they pleased, they imagined that nothing could interrupt their tranquility. The extreme complaisance of the Emperor and his eagerness to procure them all possible satisfaction made them forget all that had been disagreeable in their past life; but they little knew that this calm was so soon to be succeeded by a storm, and this state of peace and serenity by a cruel persecution.

The Empress Valeria was herself the innocent occasion of it; her beauty kindled in the heart of Maximinus a flame that was not to be resisted, so that in fact he was rather her slave than her protector; and as he had not been accustomed to curb his passions, he gave himself up to the violence of his love, without considering whether it was lawful or not. Neither the respect he owed to the memory of his uncle, nor the strict virtue of Valeria (which did not permit him to flatter himself with the least hopes of success) were strong enough to restrain

him. He had unlimited power, which seldom permits those who are invested with it to act according to reason or religion : some people are apt to think everything lawful that is possible.

It is certain that Valeria could not have made a more dangerous conquest, for in Maximinus were united all the vices that can be imagined ; he had an extreme aversion to the Christian religion, and an inexhaustible fund of brutality that made him dreadful to all the world ; as he passed most of his time in drinking to excess, and consequently was never master of his reason, it cannot be wondered at that he fell into all other sorts of irregularities and debaucheries ; particularly, his incontinence was carried to such a pitch that there was no security against it. As he was not a man to put in practice the virtue of self-denial, he thought of nothing but how to gratify those desires which were more and more excited by the beauty of Valeria ; and not having the patience to wait till the expiration of her mourning, he was resolved to let her know it without further loss of time. He began with the usual complaisance, and studying what could be most agreeable to her ; but Valeria, taking all this for an effect of his politeness, and far from imagining that it was anything more than bare civility, behaved in such a manner as gave the Emperor plainly to understand that

she did not see into his designs; it was therefore necessary for him to come to a clearer explanation. He did not, however, choose to do this himself, for the first steps in love are generally the most troublesome, and there are few men, however great their wit and assurance, who are not embarrassed upon such an occasion, especially when the declaration is to be made to a person whom it is unlawful for them to address in such language. Maximinus, who felt this sort of uneasiness, and was well acquainted with Valeria's austerity and reserve, gave this commission to one of his favourites, charging him to acquaint the princess with the impression her charms had made on him; and, that he might be more favourably heard, Maximinus gave him orders to declare that he had no other intention than to raise her to the throne, by marrying her after first divorcing his wife.

Valeria was thunderstruck at this proposal, and immediately reflected upon all the miseries that this fatal passion would involve her in. All the evils that the most cruel and the most libidinous of mankind could bring upon her crowded into her imagination. She felt little gratitude to her beauty that had laid such a snare for her, and plunged her into such deep distress. Her inclination, as well as her religion, forbade her to think of it without horror.

The emissary did not fail to exaggerate the violence and sincerity of the Emperor's love, and the great advantage she would reap by this match. She acknowledged herself infinitely obliged to the Emperor for the honour he did her,[1] but added that, in her present condition, it did not become her to listen to any proposals of that nature; that the ashes of Galerius were scarce cold, and that the mourning which she wore reminded her every moment of her husband's death. Besides this, the laws of decency would not permit her to accept the Emperor's offer, for she could look upon him in no other light than as the son of Galerius, since he had been adopted by him. That it would be unpardonable in her to do the wife of Maximinus so great an injury as to deprive her of her husband's affection; and, in short, that it would be the height of injustice, if he should divorce his wife who was so worthy of his esteem, and by no means deserved such treatment. She added that it would be very unseemly for a person of her rank to marry a second husband, and tarnish her widowhood by a fresh engagement.

The favourite did not fail to oppose all these arguments, but in vain; for the princess protested that she had made a solemn resolution against ever marrying again, and

[1] Lactan. de mortib. persec.

thereby cut short all hopes of her being prevailed upon to alter her mind, whatever brilliant and flattering promises might be made her. This answer, so little favourable to Maximinus's hopes, provoked him beyond measure, and changed his love into hatred. He resolved that Valeria should fear him at least, since she could not be brought to love him; and as it is usual for tyrants to pass from one extreme to another, he became her most cruel persecutor. At first he was determined to make her feel all the weight of his resentment, but some small remains of regard for Diocletian induced him to delay for a little time the gratification of his vengeance, which, nevertheless, only fell the heavier upon her afterwards. He turned her brutally out of her palace, seized all her effects, deprived her of her domestics, and inflicted upon her all the mortifications he could possibly invent.

The Empress Prisca, being involved in the same persecution, shared with her daughter in all these afflictions, and met with the same treatment. The princesses submitted to this inhuman usage with great courage and resolution, as far as they themselves were concerned; but what grieved them most was the affronts that were put upon many ladies of their retinue, whom they honoured with their friendship and esteem. Maximinus endeavoured to blacken their reputations, after having in vain attempted

to corrupt them. This monster of impurity, against whose attacks no woman was safe, having found in these ladies a chastity that was proof against all his solicitations, thought he could not be more effectually revenged than by accusing them of the very crime he would have persuaded them to commit, knowing that a woman of virtue is more sensible of the loss of her honour than of her life.

An infamous Jew was thought a fitting tool to carry on this piece of work. He was a notorious villain, who had been convicted of the greatest crimes; but Maximinus promised him his pardon upon condition that he would accuse these ladies before Eratineus, Governor of Nicaea, where the Court then was. The Emperor, who knew that this magistrate was fit for his purpose, had made him judge of the case. Eratineus was of a cruel, arbitrary disposition, severe against those whom he had a mind to destroy, however innocent they might be, and indulgent to such offenders as he intended to screen from punishment, however guilty they were. He had a corrupt and mercenary soul, and was anxious about nothing so much as how to make his fortune, without troubling himself about the means.

This miserable wretch, who rejoiced at having so fair an opportunity of exempting himself from the chastisement he had deserved upon such easy terms, greedily

embraced the offer, and accused the ladies of the most horrible prostitutions. Amongst these illustrious criminals there were two senators' wives who were nearly related to the Empress Prisca, and another whose daughter was one of the Vestal Virgins, and for whom Valeria had a particular regard. These ladies were all extremely handsome, and their beauty was adorned with such virtue as had enabled them to withstand all the advances of Maximinus, which was in reality the crime they were guilty of.

The accusation of this Jew, though supported by no proofs, was a sufficient reason for the condemnation of the ladies. So unjust a sentence made everybody tremble, for in such a case none could be secure. The people clamoured exceedingly against it, and a thousand voices were heard in the crowd, extolling the virtue and merit of the pretended criminals. This did not, however, save them, for as it was pre-determined that they should die martyrs to their chastity, they were accordingly executed without the city, and the iniquitous judge was not ashamed to feast his eyes upon this tragic spectacle.

But to his great confusion, as well as the Emperor's, it was not long before the wickedness of this action was discovered, for the Jew, having committed some new crime for which he was condemned to death, confessed the whole affair.

Maximinus's cruelty did not stop there. He condemned the two princesses to a strict banishment, and committed them to the charge of the most pitiless and hardhearted wretches who could be procured, who had orders to treat them with the utmost inhumanity. They were sent into the deserts of Syria, where they were reduced to the greatest misery. It was a melancholy sight to see two of the most illustrious persons in the universe, who had been always used to be treated with the greatest respect and distinction, dragged from town to town like the vilest offenders, and the objects of compassion of those who had had reason to envy their former splendour.

In all the places they passed through great multitudes flocked about them, some to gaze and gratify their curiosity, and others to be witnesses of the strange vicissitudes of Fortune, who frequently hurls people down from the highest pinnacle of grandeur to the lowest depth of wretchedness.

Valeria, however, found means to inform her father of all their afflictions, and Diocletian felt upon this occasion all that a father and a husband can suffer on account of the misfortunes inflicted upon a wife and a daughter. He sent a person of quality belonging to his Court to Maximinus to demand the Empresses; but he, looking upon Diocletian as a poor hermit who need not be regarded, despised the message.

Diocletian, having divested himself of all authority, and not being in a condition to command, had no other method of procuring redress than that of negotiating. He therefore deputed one of his near relations, who held considerable rank in the army, to obtain if possible what he had requested of Maximinus. The ambassador represented to him that both Galerius, his uncle, and he himself had been made Emperor by Diocletian's means, and though the latter, exhibiting extraordinary modesty, had resigned the empire, he had been always treated with the respect that was due to him. He added that nothing could be more reasonable than for a father and husband to demand his daughter and wife. But all these arguments and remonstrances were to no purpose, for they only served to increase Maximinus's cruelty. Instead of giving the Empresses their liberty, he increased the rigour of their exile. This deprived Diocletian of all patience; his solitude had not so infinitely broken his spirit as to render him insensible of this insulting treatment; on the contrary, it made so deep an impression on him that he felt tired of his life, and a new vexation that befel him made him resolve to destroy himself.

Licinius and Constantine, in order to cement the peace and friendship that existed between them, entered into a close alliance. Constantine married his sister Constantia

to Licinius, and the nuptials were celebrated at Milan. Diocletian was invited to be present at the ceremony, but as he had upon his abdication renounced all pleasures and diversions, and particularly at this time, when he was overwhelmed with grief on account of the misfortunes of his family, he returned thanks to the two Cæsars[1] for the honour they did him, but desired, for the above-mentioned reasons and on account of his age and infirmities, to be excused.

This refusal was taken very ill by Constantine and Licinius, and looked upon as an insult, in consequence of which they wrote him such threatening letters and so terrified the old Emperor that he killed himself. Maximinus did not long survive him, for, having quarrelled with Licinius and declared war against him, the two armies met near Adrianople. Maximinus addressed himself[2] to his gods, and promised to extirpate the Christians entirely if they would grant him the victory; but Licinius, as is credibly reported, dreamt that if he invoked the God of the Christians he would infallibly conquer. However that may have been, Maximinus was defeated, and obliged to flee with such precipitation that

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[1] Eutrop.

[2] Lactan. de mortib. persecu.

he travelled sixty leagues in twenty-four hours, till he got into Cappadocia, where, knowing that he was pursued, he poisoned himself.

It was hoped that the death of Maximinus would put an end to the sufferings of Prisca and Valeria, and, in fact, Licinius had nothing to apprehend from two Empresses who enjoyed no more than the shadow of their former dignity, for, as there were no traces remaining of their past grandeur, they could not be objects of jealousy to the reigning Empresses. Besides, they were neither ambitious enough to intrigue, nor powerful enough to carry into execution any project that might be formed for their advantage. They thought of nothing but how to pass in tranquility the remainder of a life that Maximinus had embittered with sorrow and affliction. Fortune seemed to give them some rays of hope that they might some day or other see better days, for, as soon as Maximinus was dead, Candidianus, Galerius's natural and adopted son, went to pay his respects to Licinius at Nicomedia, was received with great courtesy, and great honour and respect was paid to him by order of the Emperor. Valeria, who had the interests of Candidianus much at heart, heard with great joy of the kind reception that Licinius had given him, and thence conceived good hopes of seeing her fortune re-established. Full of these

flattering ideas she resolved to go secretly to Nicomedia, that she might be a witness of the figure Candidianus made at Court. She therefore disguised herself, went thither, and had the satisfaction of seeing him receive all the respect and honour that was due to his birth. Severianus, being encouraged by this to try his fortune, went also to Nicomedia, and was treated in such a manner as gave him reason to hope. In fact, Licinius, looking upon Severianus as the son of his ancient colleague, showed him such distinguishing marks of his esteem as procured him great respect from all the nobles of the Court; but the same reasons for which they paid him all these honours were the cause of his ruin. Those who envied him his good fortune insinuated to the Emperor that he ought to be upon his guard against a prince who thought he had a right to the throne. They told him that his name alone was sufficient to make him dreaded, for that the son of an Emperor would be apt to believe he had good claims to a throne that had been in a manner hereditary in his family—that Severianus had a good share of ambition, and wanted nothing but a suitable opportunity of making himself head of a party.

Licinius listened to these artful insinuations, and began to look upon Severianus as a dangerous person. His jealousy was attended with cruel consequences, for,

fearing he might one day have a troublesome competitor in this prince, he was determined to make himself easy in that respect, and resolved that Severianus should expiate with his life whatever designs of that kind he might have entertained. The unfortunate prince fell a victim to this inhuman precaution, and Candidianus was also involved with him in the same misfortune, when he had least reason to expect any such thing, for they were both put to death together. Valeria and Prisca, her mother, were proscribed, but being disguised, made their escape, and wandered about from province to province for fifteen months.

Their escape made Licinius the more eager to apprehend them. For a long time past he had been exasperated against Valeria, who had refused to yield up to him her right to Galerius's effects. Besides, as she was the daughter and widow of two Emperors, he looked upon her as one who, if not in a condition to form a party, was at least capable of encouraging some other person. The Emperor, after weighing and considering these things, thought he had reason sufficient to take away the lives of these fugitive princesses. He had them pursued by people, who took their measures so well that they were overtaken at Thessalonica, where he caused them to be tried as prisoners of State. It was certainly a difficult matter to convict them of any crime, but those are always guilty who have

the misfortune to fall under the displeasure of the prince; accordingly, the corrupt judges knew their duty too well not to condemn them to death. They were conducted, therefore, to the place of execution, accompanied by a great multitude, who were drawn together by the novelty of the spectacle, and who beheld, with great astonishment, the heads of two Empresses cut off by the hands of the common hangman. The bodies were thrown into the sea. This was the tragical end[1] of Prisca and Valeria, who may be said to have died martyrs to their illustrious birth and their extraordinary virtue.

The Empress Eutropia had a happier destiny. After the death of Maximinus Hercules, her husband, she went to live with Fausta, her daughter, at Constantine's Court. As she was past the age of pleasure, she thought of nothing but how to pass the remainder of her life in peace and quietness, far from the noise and hurry of State affairs. She lived to see that happy change in the empire, occasioned by Constantine, her son-in-law, embracing Christianity, which Hercules and Diocletian had endeavoured to extirpate. This religion daily gained ground from that time, got the better of idolatry, and was professed at Court and in all the provinces. The

[1] Lactan. lib. 51.

Cross became the greatest ornament of the Roman ensigns and the crowns of the Emperors. Constantine was so assiduous in propagating the faith that not only the imperial family, but the greatest part of the Court embraced Christianity; Eutropia was one of the first to profess a religion that had maintained itself in opposition to all the power of Emperors, who had exhausted all their malice and authority to abolish it, though the Christians in their defence made use of no other weapons than their patience and their prayers.

After Eutropia had been instructed in the precepts of the Gospel, she practised them with so much zeal and strictness that all the indiscretions of her past life were forgotten. She was as solicitous to promote Christianity as Hercules her husband had been to destroy it. She not only conformed to its laws, but used her utmost endeavours to abolish all the impious rites of the Pagans, and even some superstitions that had been introduced among the Christians, to the scandal of their holy religion, which more than anything evinced the soundness of her belief. This was shown in her care to suppress the annual ceremonies that were performed under the famous Oak of Mamre, so remarkable in the Scriptures for having been the residence of the patriarch Abraham, and the place where the angels announced the ruin of Sodom.

This was always celebrated in summer, and a vast concourse of Jews, Christians, and even heathens used to assemble there upon that occasion: the first,[1] to honour the memory of Abraham, the second to solemnise the apparition of their Messiah, who they imagined spoke to the patriarch in the form of an angel; and the Pagans, because they considered those angels to have been, in reality, their own gods, whom they honoured by erecting altars there, upon which they placed idols, and offered sacrifices and libations; so that each of them, for one reason or other, had the greatest respect and veneration for that place, and this occasioned an odd mixture of Pagan ceremonies, Jewish superstitions, and Christian devotions. There was a great fair held every year in that place, which drew an infinite number of people from Phœnicia, Palestine, and Arabia.

Eutropia, taking a journey into Palestine, passed through the Valley of Mamre just when they were performing these ceremonies, and saw the impious sacrifices that the heathens offered to their idols, and the superstitions practised by the Christians, who imagined they were performing their duty in a very commendable way. She was extremely offended when she observed

[1] Sozomen.

that God and the devil were worshipped in the same place; and that this valley, which had been sanctified by the solemn promises which the Almighty had made to Abraham, that from him should spring One in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, should become a theatre of impiety and profanity. She resolved to do all in her power to remedy this evil, and wrote to her son-in-law upon this subject, informing him of what she had seen done by the Pagans, Jews, and even Christians, who all dishonoured that venerable place, some by their idolatrous libations, and others by their indiscreet practice of a mistaken devotion.

Constantine, who eagerly embraced every opportunity of signalising his zeal for the Christian religion, ordered all the idols to be burnt, the altars to be overthrown, and everything that savoured of Paganism and superstition to be destroyed. He caused a church to be built on the very spot, and laid under severe penalties those who in the future should dare to profane that venerable place.

History makes no further mention of Eutropia, but apparently she continued the rest of her life in the strictest practice of the religion she had once professed.

CONSTANTIA,

WIFE OF LICINIUS.

NOTHING is generally attended with worse consequences than a woman's pretending to superior wisdom and talents in point of religion; for, as their want of learning and erudition does not admit of their penetrating those mysteries that are so much beyond their capacity, it is very easy for them to be mistaken. The obstinacy with which they maintain their opinions is apt to make them deaf to all the arguments that would be capable of undeceiving them; and if they happen to be persons of authority, what evils and mischiefs may not be committed in pursuance of a passion, which they falsely call a true zeal for the Church? Error cannot possibly meet with a firmer support, nor truth with a more formidable enemy. We have a sad example of this in Constantia.

She was daughter of Constantius Chlorus, and of Theodora, second wife of that Emperor. It is very probable that she was born in Britain, where her father usually resided after he was made Cæsar. She was a princess of uncommon merit, exempt from most of the weaknesses of her sex, and added to an extraordinary

beauty the greatest perfections of mind. She had a masculine courage, a large share of discretion and prudence, and solid virtue. She was distinguished by the force of her genius, a penetrating judgment in the most intricate affairs, a surprising eloquence, a firmness and a resolution that was not easily shaken, and was above all so skilful at healing breaches and making up differences between people at variance that she seldom failed in her attempts that way. She was, however, obstinately attached to her own ideas, and could rarely be persuaded to abandon her first opinion, which was generally something extraordinary, and contrary to that of other people; she was very fond of being singular, even in religious matters, which occasioned great inconveniences and disadvantages to the Church.

Constantia was very young when the Emperor, her father, died at York. It is generally believed that she continued with Constantine, her brother, who was proclaimed Emperor with the universal approbation of the troops, and that she remained at Court with Theodora, her mother, and the Empress Eutropia, her grandmother.

The Prætorians at Rome, being extremely provoked when they heard of Constantine's election, would not accept an Emperor who had been chosen by the army in Britain without their consent, and of whose bounty they

had not been partakers; they accordingly proclaimed Maxentius Emperor, the real or supposed son of Hercules, who had already resigned the imperial dignity. Licinius was chosen some time after, and increased the number of the Cæsars.

It would have been much to be wondered at if peace had long been preserved among four princes who had an equal share in the sovereign authority, for moderation is a virtue unknown to ambitious minds. Hercules, who had divested himself of supreme power, would gladly have reassumed it; and, the better to gain his point, he made a close alliance with Constantine, whose daughter he married; but it was not long before he conspired against his son-in-law, which cost him his life; for, finding that the conspiracy was discovered, he fled to Marseilles, where he was assassinated.

Constantine soon found another enemy in Maxentius, and, when he marched against him, had a sure presage of the victory he obtained, by the miraculous cross that appeared to him, with the results that are well known to everybody. This made him resolve to embrace Christianity, and Constantia followed her brother's example. She renounced idolatry, and became very zealous for the religion of Jesus Christ, whose maxims she followed with extraordinary fervour and devotion, which added a fresh lustre to all her other amiable qualities.

Constantine having defeated Maxentius, entered Rome in triumph, and then set the affairs of the empire in order, together with Licinius, his colleague ; and, in order to cement a solid peace and friendship between them, he gave him in marriage his sister Constantia, who was then in the height of her youth and beauty.

The nuptials were celebrated at Milan with extraordinary pomp and magnificence. Constantine, who dearly loved the princess his sister, and had the highest opinion of her discretion and virtue, omitted nothing that could contribute to the splendour of this ceremony. To do it the greater honour, he invited Diocletian, but that prince desired to be excused, which refusal annoyed Constantine extremely.

Licinius was not worthy of so great an alliance. His birth was obscure, and though he pretended to be descended from the Emperor Philip, it is certain that he had no great nobility to boast of. It is true that he had a military appearance, and, in fact, was a good officer, and a great enemy to flatterers ; but at the same time he was vicious beyond measure, and there was something haughty and severe in his deportment that sufficiently denoted that cruelty which appeared in all his actions. He was of a sour disposition, unjust, a great dissembler, covetous, and quite incapable of any sort of politeness. He was a

declared enemy to men of learning, who, he said, were the pests of the State, and being very ignorant himself he avoided as much as possible and persecuted studious people, especially orators and lawyers, who, he said, ought to be exterminated, for that they were the ruin and destruction of empires. He was inveterate in his hatred of the Christians, and persecuted them with a fury that was equally inhuman and ungrateful. Besides, he indulged himself in the most shameful of all vices, and his incontinence spared neither age, sex, nor rank. Such was the husband that Constantine, for reasons of State, gave to his sister.

After the nuptial ceremony the two Emperors separated. One of the conditions of this marriage was that Licinius should do nothing against Christianity, for Constantine, who had embraced it, insisted upon his colleague's suffering the Christians to practise their religion in peace and quietness. Accordingly Licinius, though superstitiously attached to the worship of idols, pretended to have some regard for them. The fact of the Empress being of that profession, and the fear of disobliging Constantine, who interested himself very much in their favour, was what restrained him. Their blood was, however, very often shed, which Licinius saw with pleasure, and though he was artful enough to throw all

the blame upon the governors of provinces, it was easy enough to perceive, by his forbearing to punish such as committed those cruelties, that they were far from giving him any offence.

The Empress was well acquainted with his implacable hatred of the Christians, and made use of all the power and influence she had over him to conquer in some measure his aversion to them. She secretly informed her brother of everything that was being done against them in Licinius's Court, and the Church was beholden to her for the tranquility it enjoyed at that time. It would, indeed, have been no easy matter for Licinius to refuse anything that was requested of him by an Empress whose extraordinary merit and amiable qualities rendered her so worthy of his esteem and affection. But it was not by her solicitations only that Constantia was serviceable to the Christians. They felt upon a thousand occasions the effect of her goodness, and the liberal presents which she distributed among all of them who stood in need of her assistance.

The success that Constantine had met with in his wars, and which he with gratitude attributed to the protection of the God of the Christians, and the public profession that he and his family and all the nobles of the Court made of that religion, prevailed also upon Licinius to

pretend a belief in those divine laws; but as soon as he was at a distance from Constantine he forgot all the promises that he had made his brother-in-law. He banished all the Christians from his house, re-established the worship of idols, and abandoned himself to all the abominations that are the natural fruits of idolatry. His insatiable passion for pleasures revived. He gave himself up to all manner of debauchery, and that with so little reserve or restraint that ladies of the highest rank were compelled to submit to his infamous and brutal advances.

Constantia grieved in secret at her husband's course of life, but to no purpose; for neither her remonstrances nor entreaties, nor the charms of her person, which pleaded with so much eloquence, were strong enough to produce any good effects upon him, who was such a slave to his passions that he scrupled at nothing that could contribute to their gratification. He was not content with having dishonoured the most illustrious families, but was earnestly bent upon corrupting a young lady in the Empress's suite, whose virtue recommended her to Constantia infinitely more than her beauty, though she had a great share of the latter.

The Court was then at Nicomedia, which was, without dispute, the most agreeable town in Bithynia, where

Diocletian had built a magnificent palace, which was the ordinary residence of the Emperors. It was then that the famous Eusebius became known to the Empress, who introduced him to Licinius, and on her solicitation he was made bishop of Nicomedia.

Constantia loved Glaphyra most of all the ladies at Court. She was a young person of incomparable beauty and virtue. The Emperor was captivated with her charms, and, not being a man to deny his inclinations, used all the means he could think of to seduce her; but knowing of what importance it was to his design to go artfully to work and not to alarm the Empress, who was very watchful over the conduct of her ladies, he employed Benignus, captain of his guards, to negotiate the affair.

Princes, more than all others, are so unfortunate as to meet with people who are ever ready to sacrifice honour and conscience to please them. Benignus informed Glaphyra of the impression that her beauty had made on the Emperor, and what Licinius expected from her. He did not fail to exaggerate the advantages she might reckon upon if she yielded upon this occasion, the influence it would procure her at Court, and the respect that would be shown her by all the empire as soon as it should be known that she was mistress of the Emperor's affections. He put in operation all that cunning and artifice with

which those who undertake that sort of infamous commerce are so well acquainted.

Glaphyra, who was not only a Christian, but with great strictness lived up to the religion she professed, was much surprised at these words, and, far from congratulating herself upon the conquest, she was extremely afflicted. She foresaw at once all she had to suffer from a prince of his violent passions, who stuck at nothing to gratify them. This speech of Benignus made her so confused that it sufficiently demonstrated how greatly she was embarrassed at a declaration which she neither expected nor desired; she gave the captain of the guard such an answer as was consistent with her usual virtue and discretion, and then went to communicate this to the Empress, and consult with her how she was to behave. Constantia well knew that Licinius was not easily dissuaded from anything he had resolved upon; on the contrary, the more obstacles he met with, the more obstinate he was; and, as she acted in everything with great prudence, she did not think fit to expose Glaphyra's chastity to the powerful attempts of Licinius, nor to provoke him by reproaches, which are more apt to augment the evil than cure it; but, after considering in her mind what was most proper to be done, she at last determined that Glaphyra should be disguised in

male attire. She ordered magnificent apparel to be provided for her with the greatest expedition, gave her a splendid equipage; and a large sum of money, and committing her to the care of people whose virtue she could depend upon, ordered them to conduct her to a place of safety.

Glaphyra, thus disguised, quitted Nicomedia, and set out on her travels ; she everywhere passed for a young military tribune, who was charged with some secret orders from the Court, till she arrived at Amasia, the capital of Pontus in Asia. Quintius, the most important person in the city, taking Glaphyra for a young nobleman who was honoured with the Emperor's particular confidence, paid him a visit, and even offered him his house. The pretended tribune yielded to the civility of Quintius, and was prevailed on to accept an apartment in his palace; he enquired into the state of the Christian religion at Amasia, and had the satisfaction of being informed that the Christians were under the direction of a bishop, who was remarkable for his zeal, piety, and eloquence.

It would have been almost impossible for Glaphyra not to confide her secret and the reason of her journey to somebody or other, as she foresaw that a stranger who had the appearance of a person of distinction would be narrowly observed. She thought she could not do better

than make a confidant of this good bishop, and put herself under his protection. Besides, she was persuaded that it was her duty to open her heart to some discreet person, who might give her the consolation and assistance she stood in need of.

The bishop's name was Basil, a prelate of a most exemplary life, and to him Glaphyra communicated the secret of her journey, and the danger to which she must have been exposed if she had not fled in disguise. Basil commended the innocent artifice she had made use of to preserve her honour, comforted her with good advice, and confirmed her in her generous resolution to die rather than submit to the infamous desires of Licinius. He instructed her how she should conduct herself during the stay she should be obliged to make at Amasia, and, above all, recommended her to be exceedingly careful not to mention this affair to any other person for fear the governor of the town should come to hear of it.

She followed carefully the counsel that Basil had given her, and informed the Empress of the charitable care the bishop of Amasia took of her, together with her resolution of continuing in that place under the guidance of a prelate, who was both able and willing to assist her.

Constantia was rejoiced to hear of her being safe, and sent her from time to time considerable sums of money,

which Glaphyra applied to pious uses. She gave the greatest part of it to the bishop, who, taking advantage of the tranquility the Christians enjoyed at that time, made use of it for the construction of a church, which his small funds would by no means have enabled him to build; so that the Empress's liberality to Glaphyra was a very seasonable aid. Constantia being informed by Glaphyra that the bishop had occasion for money to finish the building, made him a handsome present for that purpose.

Glaphyra's flight made a great noise at Court, and Licinius, who did not, without the utmost vexation, see the prey delivered out of his clutches, ordered that the strictest search should be made in every place that he imagined she was likely to have retired to, but in vain; Glaphyra, in Amasia, was secure against the indignation and power of the tyrant.

The Empress had frequently the pleasure of receiving letters from her favourite, but unluckily, Benignus, the Emperor's confidant, intercepted one of them, by which accident he discovered the whole secret, and informed Licinius of it. This put the Emperor in such a rage that he thought of no less than sacrificing Glaphyra and Basil to his fury. In fact, he directed the Governor of Amasia, who was a Pagan, to send him Glaphyra and the bishop in irons.

Licinius, however, had not the satisfaction of being revenged on Glaphyra, for it pleased Providence to recompense her virtue by delivering her from this world; so that, when the Emperor's orders arrived at Amasia, she was already dead. Basil was conducted to Nicomedia, where he received the crown of martyrdom for having protected the honour and chastity of this holy virgin.

The cruelty of Licinius towards the Christians much offended Constantine. That pious Emperor, who was as zealous for the Church as his colleague was attached to heathen superstitions, could not with indifference see Licinius violating the most essential condition of their treaty, by which he had bound himself to permit the Christians in the East to practise their religion in perfect liberty. Constantia, who was a true Christian herself, informed her brother secretly of everything that passed at Licinius's Court that was prejudicial to the Church. It is true that when, by her remonstrances, she imagined she had inspired her husband with more human sentiments, she interceded on his behalf with her brother; and the Emperor, who was extremely fond of his sister, dissembled the reason he had to complain of Licinius, and even pardoned his revolts; but Licinius was only the more ungrateful. That perfidious dissembler was secretly hatching treason against Constantine at the very time

when he himself enjoyed the empire, merely because Constantine would not deprive him of it.

Constantia thought this monstrous ingratitude was unworthy of pardon, and would no longer intercede with her brother for Licinius, who was not to be influenced either by threats or kindness. Constantine, therefore, finding that he could never be secure against the plots and conspiracies of Licinius if he did not put it out of his power to injure him, declared war against him, and obtained a complete victory, which Constantia heard of with pleasure. She knew that Licinius was a declared enemy to Christianity, and that the interests of her family were not to be put before her religion: that her husband was incapable of being ever induced to abandon his idols, after all the arguments and means she had made use of to procure his conversion, but without success. Besides, she had reason to apprehend that some time or other Licinius might get the better of her brother, either by force or treachery, and then she could expect nothing but that she herself would fall a sacrifice to the advantages her brother had gained over her husband. She was of opinion that, after having so often interested herself for him and employed all the influence she had with her brother to procure forgiveness for Licinius, who was ever ungrateful and rebellious, it was no longer her duty to show

so much affection and zeal for a husband who was by no means deserving of it, especially since by continuing to do so she might give just grounds to her brother to suspect her of being his enemy; therefore, when Licinius was defeated, she brought his imperial robe to her brother, to show that she did not intend to espouse his cause or concern herself any longer about him.

Constantine, however, had so much regard for his sister as to grant Licinius his life, and assign him a revenue suitable to his rank, but he, whose turbulent and unquiet temper was never at rest, could not forbear forming parties, and intriguing with factious and seditious people against Constantine, so he was at last put to death.

Constantia resided in her brother's Court, together with young Licinius, her son. This prince was very handsome, and had a great deal of vivacity in his countenance, but, at the same time, a haughtiness in his air and carriage that was not agreeable. His father had brought him up a pagan, and though Constantia had prevailed on him to turn Christian in appearance, it was very easy to perceive that in reality he was as much a heathen as ever. Constantine, to comfort his sister for the loss of her husband, and to demonstrate to the whole empire that he had been compelled to put Licinius to

death for his repeated treasons, declared the young prince consul, which office he exercised with so much pride and ostentation that he sufficiently showed he had ambition enough to aspire to a higher position. Fausta was jealous of this, and feared that in Licinius her children would one day find a dangerous competitor, and that he would revenge upon them the death of his father. Constantine, who foresaw things long beforehand, made the same reflections, which did not a little contribute to determine him to put young Licinius to death.

Constantia was infinitely afflicted at the loss of her son, but in a great measure dissembled her grief rather than occasion any uneasiness to her brother, for whom her interest as well as her duty obliged her to have great regard. He, indeed, had so extraordinary an affection for her that he gave her a power equal to his own, which was increased by the death of the Empress Helena, for whom Constantine had always the greatest regard.

Constantia, who was widow of one Emperor and sister of another, succeeded to the influence that Helena had enjoyed at Court. All favours passed through her hands. Her brother's affection for her procured her the esteem and respect of the whole empire.

Eusebius, whom Constantia had made bishop of Nicomedia, cultivated with great assiduity his acquaintance

with her, for that prelate, being of a supple, complaisant disposition, excelled in the art of paying court, so that nobody was better received by the Empress than the bishop of Nicomedia. This gave him considerable influence at the Emperor's palace, and as he knew so well how to put in practice everything that could contribute to his advancement, he soon insinuated himself into the good graces of Constantine, and became very powerful, though he had secretly favoured the party of Licinius against the Emperor, and even against Christians in general, in order to secure to himself a favourable reception in whichever of the Courts should get the better of the other. He did not at all scruple to make religion subservient to his temporal interests and ambition. As soon as Arius had broached his new doctrine, and had drawn upon himself an excommunication from the bishop of Alexandria, Eusebius, who was tainted with the same doctrines, undertook to defend him. He introduced him at Court, and took no small pains to convert the Empress Constantia to those tenets, in which he succeeded only too well, for she swallowed with greediness the fatal poison of heresy. Arius had an imposing exterior, a grave and devout air, a polite and insinuating conversation, and so much the appearance of a virtuous and religious man that the Empress was deceived by it,

and looked upon him as a person of rare and uncommon talents, who knew better than the rest of mankind how to treat of divine matters and the mysteries of religion. It was after this manner, says St. Jerome, that Arius, being resolved to propagate his heresy, began by seducing the Emperor's sister; and as he further observes, it has always been a maxim of those deceivers to lay their snares for women in the first place, as the serpent began by seducing Eve.

It is certain that Arianism could not possibly have met with a more powerful protectress than Constantia, so it is not to be wondered at if it spread prodigiously, and caused great disorders in the Church. To put a stop to this, Constantine assembled the famous Council of Nicaea, at which the errors of Arius were condemned. Eusebius was deposed, and the Emperor would have banished him if the prelate, who was extremely loth to quit the Court, had not pretended to renounce Arianism, and signed the condemnation of that heresy, against which the Council had thundered out its anathemas.

After this he found no great difficulty in reinstating himself in the good graces of Constantine by the help of his friends, especially by the Empress's interest. As he was still an Arian at heart, he laboured incessantly to promote that doctrine, which the Council had exploded,

and to invent calumnies against Athanasius, who had been made bishop of Alexandria, and was the greatest opposer of Arius. Eusebius's cunning and artifices at first met with all the success he could desire. He accused Athanasius of a thousand crimes, and of treason among the rest, and so cleverly disguised his imposture with an appearance of truth that the Emperor looked upon Athanasius as a very dangerous and seditious person. But the good patriarch, having been cited before Constantine, so clearly proved the falsehood of those slanders that the Emperor was convinced of his innocence, conceived a greater esteem for him than ever, and determined to banish his accusers.

This was like a thunderbolt to Eusebius, who did not expect so unlucky a turn of fortune. Constantia was extremely afflicted at his disgrace, but knowing that her brother was highly exasperated against him, and that her interceding for him at that time would make Constantine suspect that she held the same opinions, she thought it best not to employ her influence in his behalf till a more favourable opportunity.

This she thought she had found soon after, on the dedication of the town of Constantinople, which was called after the Emperor, and which he made the seat of the empire. Constantine at the same time celebrated the

twenty-fifth year of his reign, and the fifth year since his son Constantius was created Cæsar, which greatly added to the magnificence of the ceremony. Constantia concluded that there could not possibly be a more convenient time than this to solicit the return of Eusebius, whose absence she could not bear. She made use of all her influence with her brother to obtain this favour, and also set her nephew Constantius to work for the same end, who joined his entreaties to those of Constantia. The Emperor, not being able to resist these importunities, consented that the prelate should return.

Constantia could not have done a greater disservice to the Church; for Eusebius was more to be feared than Arius himself, who would not have been able to propagate his tenets without the assistance of Eusebius and some other bishops. This justice must, however, be done to the Empress, that she did not believe that Eusebius was heretically inclined, but rather imagined that he was unreasonably persecuted by those who were jealous of his superior merit and learning. This princess was persuaded that his opinions were very innocent, and being desirous to distinguish herself from other people, pretended to greater knowledge in divine mysteries than the rest of her sex, and so drank deep of the poison of Arianism, and, not thinking there was the least harm in

it, became the protectress of its most zealous champion. What was still worse, she persisted in this error till her death, for to her last moment she continued in her endeavours to recommend to Constantine's favour and friendship the most dangerous enemy of the Church. This person was a priest, entirely devoted to the Arians, and more zealous for that doctrine than Arius himself. He concealed his true sentiments under the appearance of extraordinary piety, which deceived those who were not intimately acquainted with him. Eusebius, the bishop of Nicomedia, put the greatest confidence in this hypocrite, and trusted him with his most important secrets. He introduced him to the Empress Constantia as a man of consummate virtue. This priest, by his devout air, his infatuating conversation, and external sanctity, maintained the character that was given of him to the Empress, and gained such an ascendency over her that he could manage her as he pleased. Constantia did nothing without his advice; and, as she affected to practise a devotion that was out of the common track and different from other people's, she listened to nobody but this artful deceiver, who, under pretence of conducting her to perfection by such sublime methods as were far above the capacity of inferior geniuses, infected her with the most dangerous heresy, which was prepared with the greatest art and cunning.

As soon as this dissembler perceived that the Empress placed entire confidence in him, he consulted with his patron Eusebius about the means of getting Arius recalled, and how to interest the Empress in his favour. They felt that it would be very difficult to procure his pardon if they did not take the greatest precautions; for Constantine was extremely zealous for the opinions upheld at the Council of Nicaea, and consequently was no friend of those who were accused of differing from them. This priest, therefore, while with the Empress, artfully turned the conversation upon Arius, and, affecting to sigh and look very melancholy, the Empress asked him the reason of it. The priest answered, with an air of affliction, that he could not help being grieved when he thought of the sad condition of one of the best of men, who was cruelly oppressed by those who envied the sublime talents and extraordinary gifts with which Providence had blessed him. "Arius," said he, "is unfortunate only because he is the worthiest and greatest ecclesiastic the Church can boast of; his merit and virtue are his only crimes. This divine man is fallen under the displeasure of the patriarch Alexander, and is become the object of his persecution. He cannot endure a person whose profound doctrine is universally esteemed, and who has acquired such knowledge of the mysteries of religion as few have attained to.

The patriarch has done his utmost to banish from Alexandria this person of uncommon parts and learning, merely because he has been eclipsed by him; and has caused him to be condemned in the Council by imputing to him doctrines and opinions that he never entertained. The whole population of Alexandria is witness of this great man's innocence, for he has for many years past preached with such general applause, that it is acknowledged by everybody that none before him has ever shown such noble and sublime sentiments in religious matters. This man, however, so much favoured and enlightened by Heaven, and who deserves the highest dignities in the Church, is fallen a sacrifice to the blackest malice and envy, banished from his country, driven shamefully out of the Church, and treated with greater hatred than if he were a declared enemy to religion."

Constantia listened with great attention to her director, whom she little suspected of any intention to deceive her. She did not doubt that all he had said of Arius, and the persecutions he had undergone, was literally true. From that time Constantia looked upon Arius as the greatest man in the Church, being persuaded that he who had spoken so much in his behalf was the person in the world the most capable of judging of true merit. She dared not, however, at that time intercede for him with

her brother, knowing him to be very averse to Arianism. It was for all that a great advantage to Arius and his disciples to have prepossessed the Empress in his behalf, for they knew so well how to make the most of her sentiments towards him that they never rested till they had gained their point, and secured his recall from banishment.

Matters were in this state when Constantia fell dangerously ill, and during her sickness Constantine visited her every day. He gave her undoubted tokens of the sincere love and affection he bore her, and of his ardent desire to do everything in his power to aid her recovery; but her disease could not be cured by all the remedies that could be thought of, so that Constantia knew she was near her end. The Emperor was in the utmost affliction, when he was informed by the physicians that he was to lose the person in the world he loved best. The Empress, finding that death was approaching very fast, and seeing her brother at her bed's foot overwhelmed with sorrow, took him by the hand, and with dying looks, "My dear brother," said she, in a weak voice, "I have received from you an infinite number of favours and kindnesses, which you have conferred upon me with so much generosity that I cannot doubt you will grant that which I am now to ask. It is indeed the last request

I shall ever trouble you with, but more valuable than all the rest. It is that you will give me leave, in return for all your goodness, to make you such a present as will, above all things, show my sincere affection and gratitude. Princes are surrounded by courtiers and sycophants, who are zealous enough for their own interests to promote their temporal honour and grandeur, but they are so unfortunate as to have but few real friends about them who are solicitous for their eternal salvation. See here," said she, "a man whose virtue, merit, and fidelity I am well acquainted with," presenting to him her director; "he will inspire you with those exalted sentiments which he has received from the Almighty, and which he has been so good as to impart to me. He will be always inviolably attached to your spiritual interests, and will conduct you to perfection by such ways as Providence has communicated to no other but himself. Your future happiness will be safe in his hands, so I can safely affirm that I give you an inestimable treasure. I beseech you to put entire confidence in him, and to be ever mindful that he was given you by a sister who has nothing to wish for but your everlasting happiness. I will now confess to you that it has not been without the most sensible grief and concern that I have seen you so apt to be deceived by those who have made an ill use of

the trust you have placed in them, and have prevailed on you to persecute, very unjustly, the most deserving of the clergy, who have, by their instigation, been shamefully driven from the Church. Take care that that unreasonable severity does not draw upon you some dreadful punishment. This is the last petition of a sister who, you may be assured, is now solicitous for nothing but your true interest, and who must leave you in a few moments."

She had great difficulty in uttering these words. The agony of death seized her, and she expired in the presence of her brother, who was inconsolable, and upon whom her words made great impression.

Thus Constantia employed the last moments of her life in recommending to Constantine's protection Arius and his followers, who knew but too well how to take advantage of the indulgence that was procured them by Constantia's dying request, which sunk deep into the heart of the Emperor.

End of the Second and Last Volume.

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